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August 2015

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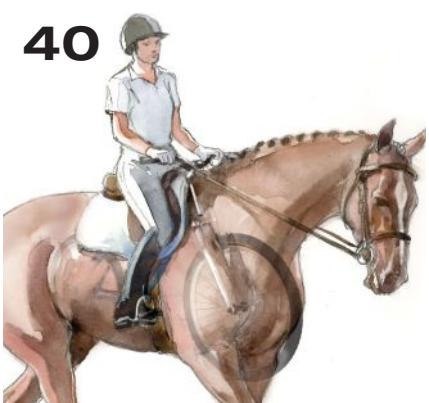
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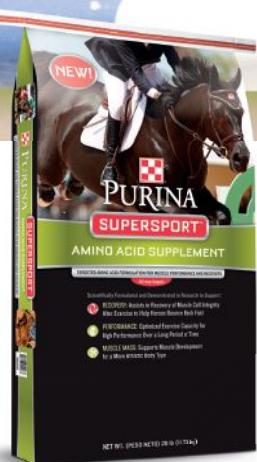
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Increased bone fragility has been observed in animals treated with bisphosphonates at high doses or for long periods of time. Bisphosphonates inhibit bone resorption and decrease bone turnover which may lead to an inability to repair micro damage within the bone. In humans, atypical femur fractures have been reported in patients on long term bisphosphonate therapy; however, a causal relationship has not been established.

ADVERSE REACTIONS: The most common adverse reactions reported in the field study were clinical signs of discomfort or nervousness, colic and/or pawing. Other signs reported were lip licking, yawning, head shaking, injection site swelling, and hives/pruritus.



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Editor's Note

Loving Equitation

I have an odd confession, especially for a person in her 40s: I love equitation.

This has not always been the case.

When I was in my teens, I hated it. I started competing in the equitation divisions when I was about 14 and wasn't very good. I much preferred riding in jumper classes where I could just go fast or hunter courses where I didn't have to worry about my position. Or so I thought.

The other thing I really disliked about equitation was that the horse had to be in a frame. Early on, my idea of getting horses round was to pull in their heads, which they didn't much like.

But after I aged out of the junior equitation classes, I started to figure out that equitation matters regardless of division. I realized that putting my heels down made me stronger and helped me to recover faster after jumps, leading to tighter turns in the jumper ring. It struck me that paying attention to my posture on the flat helped me control my upper body over fences, which improved any horse's form. I also realized that understanding pace and how to best approach fences along with counting strides—all hallmarks of good equitation riding—made for smoother hunter and jumper courses.

About the same time, I started working with a trainer who taught me how to let go of my horse's mouth and ride him more from my leg. We started at the walk, and it took several months for me to get the big picture: If I focused more on my horse's hind end and didn't worry so much about his front end, he rounded his entire topline and was light in my hands.

I started thinking about these experiences after reading two of this month's stories—"Equitation: Its Relevance Today" by Peter Wylde (page 24) and "Learn to Let Go" by Anne Kenan (page 40). At first glance, the stories may seem to have limited audiences, but I think they speak to what is at the heart of riding for everyone, whether you're 14 or 40.

As for myself, I now love equitation because it gave me a strong foundation that has stayed with me throughout my riding life. Whenever I get on a horse, those solid basics give me confidence, which in turn, makes riding fun.

Take care.

Sandy

Sandra Oliynyk
Editor



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Tip of the Month

"The thing with horses is you have to find what makes you happy at the end of the day. The bottom line is it's about being with horses and enjoying horses." —Elisa Wallace, page 34

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Your Turn

Trusting Your Instincts

I just finished reading "Try It, You'll Like It," Jim Wofford's article in the May 2015 issue, and it couldn't have come at a better time! I currently take lessons with two different instructors with two totally different backgrounds. One is Parelli/Natural Horsemanship-based and the other is traditional dressage-based. Both are wonderful instructors and have recently started helping me with my horse's tendency to brace against the leg and bridle. Both have given me totally opposite things to try, stating that what I was previously doing, which was what the other instructor told me to do, was wrong. Both ways kind of worked and, at the same time, kind of didn't. I was starting to get confused and frustrated until I thought to myself, "Hey, you know your horse and what has and hasn't been working." I ended up combining the two suggestions and formed my own way of asking for softness. Lo and behold, my method seems to be working! I'm so grateful for the expertise of both trainers, but in the end, I had to do what I felt was right. Jim's article just confirmed that I could trust my instinct and that it is OK to make mistakes as long as you learn from them (and are kind to your horse!).

Kate Weller, North Carolina



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Hunting-Photo Critique

To George Morris: So many thanks for the critique of our hunting photo in the April 2015 issue. I was really thrilled with the positive remarks and your comments on my good boy's bascule. We have a lot of fun out there, running with those crazy hounds!

Alexis Macaulay, Florida

Safety Concerns

I have a comment about another potential consequence of leading a horse by holding the halter directly [“Correct Way = Safe Way,” February 2015]. I was trampled by the horse I was leading because two horses lunged at her from behind. Because I was so close, her left shoulder hit my right shoulder, knocking me forward. Her rear hoof crushed my right arm, which now has 15 pins and two plates.

Carol Reising, via email

Regarding the article on safety around horses, I strongly disagree with the information on tacking up, page 38. In Photos 1 and 2, the groom has the halter around the horse's neck clipped to both crossties. I was a Pony Clubber and professional groom for years and was taught never to do that. If the horse spooks and jumps forward, he will break the halter or ties. I was taught to unclip one crosstie from the halter, put the reins around the horse's neck, then take the halter off and put the bridle on, which gives you more control.

Helen Kalevas, via email

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Rider to Rider

This month's question:

**What flatwork exercises
do you most like to
incorporate into your
daily rides?**

Some ride circles, serpentines and transitions. Others work on leg yields and over ground poles.

I've owned a hot, sensitive Thoroughbred/warmblood-cross mare for 8 years. Doing flatwork is like riding a ticking time bomb because she can handle only so much. I always incorporate serpentines into my flatwork because it keeps her brain busy and helps her stay soft and relaxed. I am a show jumper but have done eventing and once worked with a great dressage trainer who taught me to give with my hand by scratching my mare's neck as I released my contact. My mare enjoys the reward, and plus it helps keep her supple and relaxed. One thing you'll never see me do is stay on the rail. Instead, I'll ride serpentines and circles or weave around jumps.

Ashley Pollock, Arizona

I love serpentines. I feel most riders just go around and around the ring, maybe changing directions every now and again. But with serpentines, the horse has to engage himself and be ready for the next turn. I have found that those horses who have a hard time getting into a frame benefit from this exercise because they are able to work both directions and stretch their necks around each end of the serpentine.

Laura Baginski, Missouri

Beginning at A or C, I do a large 20-meter circle, then a 10-meter circle, ending at the quarterline and continuing straight down it for the length of the arena. The exercise tests inside and outside aids, bending, straightness and accuracy all at the same time.

Jennifer Varnell, via Facebook

The Drunken Pony: I like to start at the rail or quarterline and do three to six alternating leg yields down the long side. This exercise has helped us prepare for the leg yield to centerline and back in First Level Test 3.

Joanna Olsen, via Facebook

My little mare loves ground poles. She gets bored with everything else but perks up with poles.

Marquette Gunderson, via Facebook

Transitions.

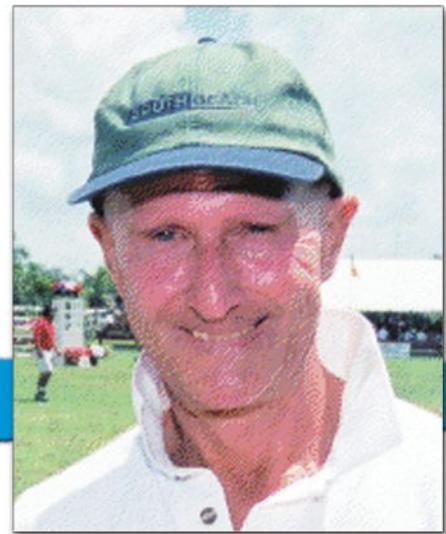
Betty Frediu, via Facebook

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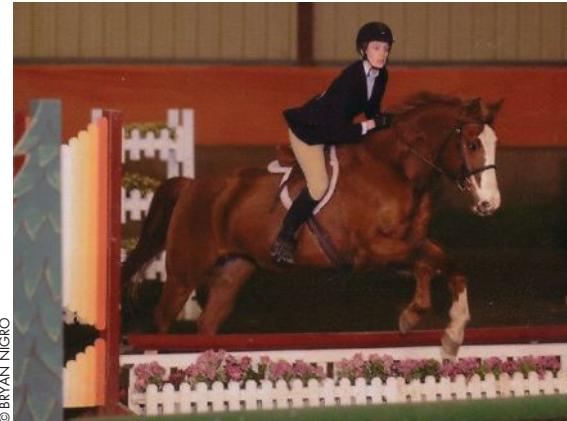
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For equitation or hunter classes, no matter how small the show or low the jumps, the horse's mane and forelock should be braided.

Three Longish Releases; One Almost Automatic



© BRYAN NIGRO



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1 Our first rider's leg has slipped back over this low fence. As a consequence, her heel has come up and she has lost her security. When this happens, the leg can inadvertently become a strong aid telling the horse to go forward when that might not be what the rider wants. From this rider's expression, I can see that she is a little apprehensive. To fix her leg—and her security—she needs to return to crossrails, riding 10 to 15 in a row, and focus on keeping her heel down and leg stabilized.

Despite her leg problems, this rider's base of support is excellent. Her seat is slightly out of the saddle—just enough. I like her upper body. She has a beautiful posture with hollow loins. She is using more of a long release, where her hands are pressing into the crest of the horse's neck.

This is a showy chestnut with a lot of white. He has a nice expression with space between his eyes and biggish ears. He doesn't have a good front end. Even with all of these ground lines, his left leg is hanging and his right leg is not really tight. He's what I call a "hanger." Plus he's a little twisted and very flat. From the poll to the dock of the tail, there is practically a straight line. He has very little bascule. He appears to be a pleasant sort, and at this height, he's all right, but if he were ridden to a short distance over bigger fences, his form could be terrible and he might even be unsafe. I'd be reluctant to take him across country over fixed fences, even low ones.

The dark photo makes assessing turnout hard, but it appears average. I don't see any shine to the horse's coat. For equitation or hunter classes, no matter how small the show or low the jumps, the horse's mane and forelock should be braided. The rider is dressed appropriately in clean, conservative attire.

2 As far as form, this rider is textbook. Her heels are down, her ankles are flexed and her toes are out a shade. Her calf is in contact with the horse. The stirrup leather is almost perpendicular to the ground, though as readers know, I don't care for the black stirrup irons.

Her base of support is fine. She's not jumping ahead or dropping back. The loin area, at her belt, is a little convex; it could be flatter. When riders ride a great deal, this can happen, but it's not attractive or effective in aiding a horse. Her eyes are up. This is a beautiful release. It's just about an automatic, maybe one quarter of an inch too high. Her hands are alongside the horse's neck and she's maintained a light contact with his mouth. It is very classically correct.

The horse, a pinto type, is beautiful. They rarely go the distance in jumping very big fences, but they're competitive up to 1.45 meters, maybe 1.50 meters. They can be very careful and very fast, and that's what this one looks like. His knees are pointing down but very little. He's so tight and even with his whole front end and so high above the jump, I'm not worried about him hanging. His hind end is equally good, square and kicking up. His bascule is not extravagant, but it's rounder than the previous horse.

The horse's coat is very glossy and clean, especially impressive because of all that white. He's in a smaller jumper class, so he doesn't need to be braided. I would like to see her riding in a coat with a buttoned collar and stainless-steel irons.

As an aside, I think I've taught this rider before at a clinic. She is a student of World Cup champion Rich Fellers. Most people admire Rich for his riding, but I'm also very proud of his teaching. He does a good job instilling the basics.



3 This rider's basics are very good. Her heels are well down, her toes are out and her ankles are flexed. Her leg has slipped back just a little, but it's refreshing to see that she has a short enough stirrup for jumping. The angle behind her knee is close to 90 degrees, which is appropriate. Often you see people riding with stirrups that are too long. I like the stainless-steel, heavy-duty stirrup irons this rider has. The others are too light and don't help people ride better. If I found a piece of riding equipment that improved my riding, I would use it, but the black ones don't do this.

Her seat is out of the saddle yet close enough that she's not jumping ahead. In her belt area, there's a small roach. I don't want a swayback, but I have to note that it is a fault. Her eyes are up. She's using a long crest release, which you can use with or without grabbing mane. This helps teach that the hands push, they don't pull back, which is why we grab mane when learning—to learn to push rather than to pull. It's a very appropriate release for this rider's age.

The horse has a nice expression with his eyes and ears and he's probably a saintly soul, but he has a poor front end. His right front leg is hanging. This could be the result of having to reach so much because the ground line in front of the fence has been pulled too far out. It's dangerous because some horses might think they have to jump the pole and put their feet down between the pole and the front of the fence.

The horse's weight is OK, but his coat doesn't seem exceptionally clean. I'd like to see his mane braided. The saddle pad and tack fit nicely. The rider's turnout is OK. Her coat looks a tad too big, but her attire looks clean.

4 This stylish, elegant rider has an old-fashioned leg. Her foot is jammed on the inside of the stirrup iron, and her heel is very far down with the foot turned out. It's a secure position, but it's not supple or soft. She needs to reposition the stirrup so her little toe touches the outside stirrup branch and the iron crosses her foot at an angle. The iron, not the rider's foot, should be at a right angle to the girth. Also her stirrup is too long. The angle where her calf and thigh come together is about 130 degrees; it should be between 90 and 110 degrees. She needs to shorten the leather by a hole. When a rider reaches for her stirrup, she does not have the support and springs to accompany the horse over the fence, so instead she must jump ahead. In this case, the rider is jumping ahead, which I can tell because her seat is a little too high out of the saddle.

She has a beautiful back—it's not stiff or exaggerated—and her eyes are up. She's using more of a long release, but her hands are floating above the crest a little. I want to see them pressing into the crest to support her upper body. She's well up to trying an automatic release. To do this, she needs to lower her hands about 6 inches so that there is a straight line from her elbow to the horse's mouth, which allows for the best communication with the horse.

The horse's knees are up and he's very even with his forearms. He's a little uneven below the knees but he's safe. He's a very hollow, flat jumper. From his poll to the dock of his tail is actually inverted, making more of a U shape.

He is beautifully turned out. His gray coat is scrupulously clean. His mane and forelock are braided. The rider's attire is conservative, clean and well fitting. They look ready to impress. ☐



© SANDRA OLNEY

George H. Morris is the former chef d'équipe of the U.S. Equestrian Federation Show Jumping Team. He serves on the USEF National Jumper Committee and Planning Committee, is an adviser to the USEF High-Performance Show Jumping Committee and is president of the Show Jumping Hall of Fame.



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Whether judging a model class, evaluating a prospect for a client or sizing up the yearlings at home, I first stand back and look at the horse for an overall impression of balance and symmetry. My ideal horse "fits" in a square box. By that, I mean he has matching and equal parts, both from front to back and side to side. This allows for athletic ability, soundness, trainability and longevity in the job.

A horse who fits in a box will have a body made up of one-third shoulder, one-third back and one-third hindquarters. I like to see the withers and point of croup at the same level. The horse's stance, from point of shoulder to buttock, should equal the distance from the height of the withers to the ground.

I always look at eyes—not as a veterinarian, but because I want to see a horse with clear, alert vision. From the head, I move down the neck to the shoulders and along the back to the hind end and leg.

For jumpers, the emphasis should be on hindquarters with a good length from the hipbone to the point of the buttock for power off the ground. For hunters, the emphasis should be a level topline from ears to tail, a well-sloped shoulder for fluid movement and the ability to lift in the air as well as quality and typiness.



Owner of Maplewood Stables in Reno, Nevada, **Julie Winkel** has been a U.S. Equestrian Federation "R" hunter breeding judge for 30 years and a Canadian Equestrian Federation "S" judge for more than 15 years. She co-chairs the USEF Licensed Officials Committee and serves on the Young Jumper Championships and USHJA board of directors. Julie has judged pony and hunter breeding at Devon and Upperville, the Sallie B. Wheeler Championship and the USHJA Hunter International Derby. She hosts annual sporthorse inspection tours at her facility, where she stands her grand-prix stallions, Cartouche Z and Osilvis. As a rider, trainer, judge and breeder, Julie focuses on which traits make athletic horses and how structure affects soundness.

6-year-old gelding Thoroughbred

DISCIPLINE: Hunters/Jumpers



7-year-old gelding Thoroughbred

DISCIPLINE: Hunters/Jumpers



6-year-old gelding Thoroughbred

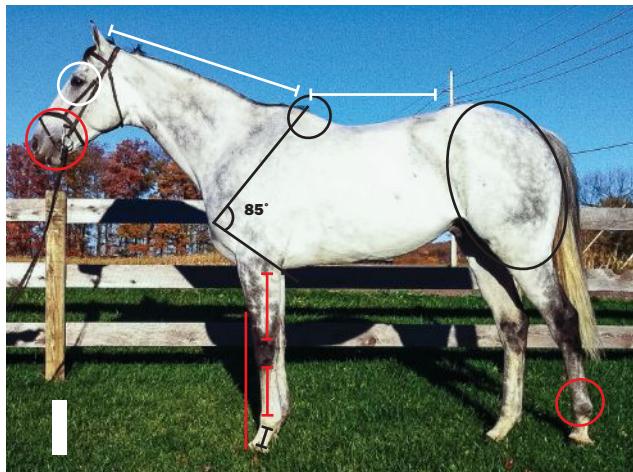
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To submit a photo to be evaluated in Conformation Clinic, send us a side-view photo of your horse, posed similarly to those shown above. For digital photos: at least 3" x 5" at high resolution (300 dpi). Make sure your entire horse is in the photo and that he's well-groomed, preferably wearing a bridle, looking straight ahead and standing on level ground—and try to avoid distracting backgrounds. Email Practical.Horsemag@EquiNetwork.com or mail a print to Conformation Clinic, Practical Horseman, 656 Quince Orchard Rd., Suite 600, Gaithersburg, MD 20878. Include your contact information and your horse's breed, age and gender and the disciplines in which you ride. If the photo is professionally taken, please include the photographer's name and contact information.



Our winner fits perfectly in a box with equal parts of shoulder, midsection and hindquarter.

He has large eyes, ears and nostrils to take in his surroundings. His muzzle is a bit coarse, highlighted by the poorly fitting cavesson and improperly placed bit keepers.

His nice neck length attaches cleanly to a beautiful length of shoulder. The well-laid-back shoulder with the well-proportioned, well-placed humerus (point of shoulder to elbow) will create a long, ground-covering stride.

The prominent withers blending into his short, strong back will make

saddle-fitting a breeze. He has a very powerful hindquarter.

However, his forearm and cannon bone are nearly equal in length. This creates more weight below the knee to carry each stride. Also, he is calf-kneed, or back at the knee. His joints appear adequate in size, but the ankles look thick due to pasterns that are more upright than ideal.

With his higher-set neck and strong build behind, he looks better suited to jumpers than hunters. Overall, this horse is a balanced, handsome, powerful specimen with some front-end concerns.



This gelding appears unrefined in several areas. His overall balance is not ideal as much of the body's length falls in his midsection.

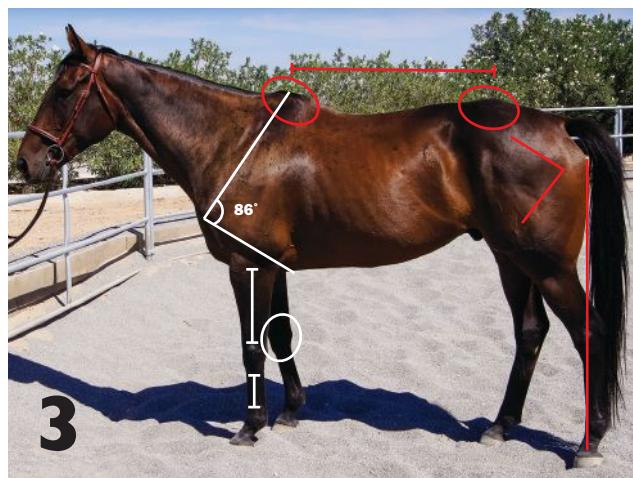
He has an attractive head with a kind eye, but the short mouth length limits sensitivity. His throat-latch looks a tad thick and connects to an ewe neck, which is upside down and limits proper head carriage and flexibility. He has a low neck-to-shoulder attachment that further restricts range of motion.

His shoulder length and slope are average with well-defined withers. His forearms are well-muscled with adequate length, and his can-

non bones are relatively short for a smoother step. His pasterns also show acceptable length and slope.

His downfall is his long, weak topline with a poorly constructed croup. The long back predisposes him to back soreness while making collection and lead changes challenging. The hindquarters are short in length with little hind leg angulation, which limits engine power.

Additionally, he's built downhill, with withers lower than the croup, which adds weight to the forelegs. This gelding has pleasant looks but is built for a downhill ride with limited reach, power and flexibility.



Our third-place entry fits into a rectangle rather than a square. He is quite long compared to his legs.

His common head has an average-sized eye, nostril and mouth. An oiled bridle and another bit choice would be more flattering. His average-length neck connects to a nice long shoulder with good angulation. However, his overly prominent withers will make saddle fit a challenge, with extra care needed to prevent wither sores.

His front legs sit under the shoulder, offering support and balance for his front end. The forearms show good length and attach to roomy knees with desired short-

er cannons, all in good alignment.

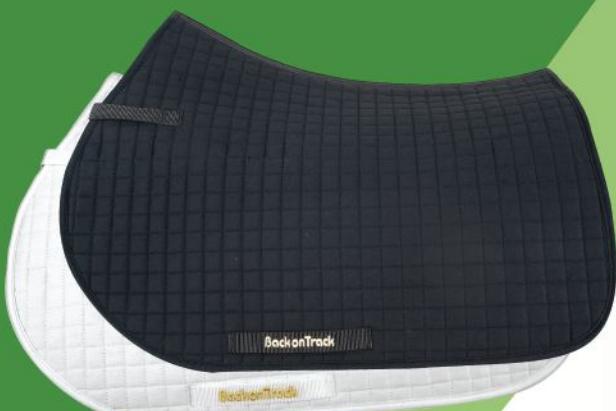
Here we see an extremely long back that has already suffered a jumper's bump. This tearing or strain of the sacroiliac joint is painful initially, requires rest to heal and remains problematic because recurrence is common. His hind legs are camped out, situated too far behind him. This is due to the open angle of the pelvis-to-femur junction. Coupled with the long back, this build diminishes range of motion, ease of lead changes, collection and thrust at takeoff.

Heart and try can overcome many defects, but this gelding ranks least athletic of this trio. ☺



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Based at Fox Covert Farm, in Upperville, Virginia, Jim Wofford competed in three Olympics and two World Championships and won the U.S. National Championship five times. He is also a highly respected coach. For more on Jim, go to www.jimwofford.blogspot.com.

Change the Rules—And Change the Sport

How tinkering with any horse sport's format activates the Law of Unintended Consequences

I have been watching the changes in our international equestrian disciplines for a long time now and, as usual, I have some opinions. Not every change is good, not every change is necessary, but every change to the rules has an effect on the sport as a whole and on the horses we use to participate in that sport. Here are some cases in point.



© AMY K DRAGO

Breeding sporthorses is a big business, and the people involved in it are very sophisticated. When the demands of a sport are changed, the breeders change the type of horse they produce. Modern dressage horses need to have calm temperaments and extravagant paces. Passage and piaffe are awarded extra points by dressage judges, so breeders have emphasized the breeding of horses who passage and piaffe for fun. The Netherlands' Edward Gal established an extraordinary partnership with Moorlands Totilas and had several very successful seasons with him, as shown in this lovely photo taken at the 2010 World Equestrian Games in Lexington, Kentucky. It always impressed me that Edward seemed to allow Totilas to piaffe and passage rather than demand the movements. When this pair was at their best, they were hard to beat. Certainly a great deal of that success is due to Edward's skill, but credit must also go to the breeders for producing horses such as this.

First Example: The Olympics Go Pro

Look what happened during the 1980s, when the International Olympic Committee professionalized the Olympic Games. Before this, riders were not supposed to make money from their riding. They had to have outside sources of income, which a few had, or had to cheat, which most did. At every Olympics there was a conspiracy of silence between the various nations—they would not protest our riders' amateur status if we would not protest their riders' status. This was cynical and hypocritical, but that was the way it was.

I was heavily involved in equine politics during the 1980s and participated in the discussions regarding the change from amateur to professional participation. When someone insisted we change our national rules in advance of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics as an example to the rest of the equestrian sporting world, I said, "You leave the rules alone right now. We have got the best amateurs that money can buy." I already knew that changing the rules would produce revolutionary changes in the sport.

Once the Olympics were professionalized, the quality of the riding improved markedly because riders could devote themselves to their sport full time. The expertise of present-day elite riders is marvelous. They love their horses as much as amateur riders from earlier times, but they are also able to make a living riding them.

Breeding to Suit Rules

Even more appealing to me than the growing proficiency of elite riders is the fact that our horses are getting better as well. I noticed this at the 2010 World Equestrian Games where I first saw Moorlands Totilas competing in the flesh rather than on YouTube. Totilas gave me the impression that he would rather passage and piaffe than open a Christmas present, and I suddenly realized that sporthorse breeders had for years been aiming their programs toward producing just such a creature. This was a result of the change in the dressage scor-

ing rules, which ensures that piaffe and passage movements receive extra marks in Grand Prix dressage tests. Obviously, horses who can do those movements well are going to be more competitive; once again, a change in the rules changed the sport. We are now witnessing an influx of horses purpose-bred for modern Grand Prix dressage.

I have recently heard dressage experts comment that breeders are producing and judges are rewarding horses with extravagant movement. However, some say that this extravagant movement comes at the expense of the clarity and correctness of the horse's basic paces. This argument is occurring far above my pay grade, but it proves my main point—that when we change the rules, we change the sport and we change the horse.

Jumping into Big Bucks

And speaking of pay grades, international show jumping is taking place far above our pay grade. Riders now routinely compete for millions of dollars at some shows every week, and if you are able to sell a good prospect into the show-jumping ring, you can buy a small farm with the proceeds. In this instance, the sport and its horses changed when the FEI (Fédération Equestre Internationale), the international ruling body of equestrian sport, changed the rules to encourage organizers to offer more prize money to obtain a certain designation. International show-jumping competitions now have a star rating system, ascending from one to five stars. A five-star competition is required to offer at least half a million dollars. Five-star competitions that meet these requirements attract the best horses and riders. This brings crowds, which brings more sponsors and more television and so on.

If you are the owner of a big-time show jumper and you want to watch your horse compete from a ringside seat, you will pay more for a table at the hypothetical "Inner Circle Club" than I paid for my first house, and the waiting list for those tables would fill the club a second time.



© AMY K DRAGO/AMMEDIA

Modern show-jumping courses require a special horse with the power to jump huge obstacles, the desire to leave the rails up and the athleticism to change gears quickly. The time required at major competitions is tight, so riders need careful horses who can gallop, slow down quickly to make sharp turns and then immediately accelerate toward the next series of obstacles. Beezie Madden and Simon were fourth at the 2015 Longines FEI World Cup Jumping Final in Las Vegas, Nevada. Beezie would probably agree that it is a lot easier to be successful when you are sitting on horses bred for the job. Simon is strong enough to jump a 5-foot vertical but careful enough to leave plenty of air above the jumps. From the look on his face, Simon, the 2013 World Cup Final winner with Beezie, completely enjoys his job.

That kind of demand spells success for the organizers, riders and owners associated with international show jumping, but the breeders share part of that success as well. They are now consistently producing horses bred specifically for modern show jumping. The 21st century equine show-jumping version is athletic and sensitive and exhibits the strange mixture of caution and courage that is always the hallmark of good jumpers.

Eventing: Unintended Consequences Abound

The third of our Olympic equestrian sports, eventing, is composed of three different disciplines, which means that any change to the rules of one part reverberates throughout the other parts as well. This makes eventing a petri dish for the Law of Unintended Consequences. For example, in 2004 the FEI changed event-

ing's format by removing the endurance element from the cross-country phase.

Theoretically, this placed dressage and show jumping on an equal footing with cross country, which until then had been by far the most important of the three disciplines. As a result, riders and trainers thought that dressage and show jumping would now have more influence than cross country on the final results, so they naturally selected horses who were good movers and careful jumpers in order to excel in these phases. I firmly believe that these rule changes were intended to raise the standard of event riders' technical skills, and in two of eventing's three parts, the rule-makers succeeded beyond their wildest dreams.

However, while endurance was removed from eventing, the risk factor remained. Eventing has always been the most dangerous of the Olympic equestrian

disciplines, but the change in the format did little to improve the situation. When the rules were revised to increase the importance of dressage and show jumping, the rule-makers forgot that the risk factor in dressage is low and only slightly more so in show jumping. Yet as another unintended consequence, the change in the rules caused riders to select horses who lacked the qualities needed to reduce the risk of galloping over fixed obstacles. The rules were changed, the horses were changed, but the risk remains.

What's the Answer?

Eventing is often referred to as "the triathlon of the horse world," a handy explanation for the general public and one I use myself. However, there is not enough consideration of the sport as a whole

rather than as three distinct parts. Eventing is more than a three-part competition. In my opinion, the organic and holistic qualities of eventing distinguish it from other horse sports.

Winston Churchill said, "Out of intense complexities intense simplicities emerge." I wonder if he was talking about eventing?


We need to very carefully think through the effect of proposed rule changes because every time we change the rules, we change the sport. We may want to change our sport, but it should happen on purpose, not by accident.

When you analyze the sport, you realize that it is based on antithetical requirements. Dressage requires above all else calmness and submission. However, cross country demands a high degree of physical fitness, which can produce tension in horses, and tension is very detrimental to dressage scores. Another example: Cross-

country horses can jump from unusual situations; are not afraid to brush through soft obstacles; take a very flat, fast bascule; and can give the occasional log a pretty good bump. Show jumpers, on the other hand, act as if they are allergic to pain. They are ultra careful, often jumping well above obstacles, and are happiest jumping from predetermined takeoff spots. Again you can see the opposing nature of the requirements for event horses.

A final example: Both dressage and show jumping require submission from the horse, yet cross country requires initiative. Two parts of the competition are based on submission while one part—the dangerous part—is based on the horse's initiative and self-reliance.

Rather than view my sport as a bundle of contradictions, however, I view it as

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the opportunity to train the complete equine and human athletes. Done correctly, the antithetical nature of eventing's requirements produces a final synthesis—a superbly trained horse, ridden by a superb rider and horseman.

More Changes Ahead?

Given the effect of rules on our sport, where does eventing go from here? First, our committees do not think enough about a sport that uses antithetical elements to produce the perfect equine athlete, a sport where any change to one part always has subtle, unintended effects on the other parts. For example, the FEI has recently changed the order of the phases in CICs and may also implement the same change in CCIs in the future: Where we once went dressage, then cross country and then show jumping, quite often we are now running dressage first, then show jumping with cross country last. It's a bet-

ter spectacle for TV, the marketing experts say. Horses jump better, the riders say.

All true. However, if this new order is implemented throughout the sport, I predict that in a few years we will hear a cry from the riders' associations: "There are too many clear show-jumping rounds. We need to increase the technicality, heights and spreads of the test." Naturally, horses are fresher before cross country and will jump better in the stadium. But an unintended consequence of this change would make it possible for unscrupulous riders and trainers to resort to abusive practices such as tack rails and offset rapping bars in preparing for show jumping. As presently constituted, these practices do not have much effect. Horses forget their experiences after galloping cross country, so trainers rarely "rap" their horses before competitions. If we change the sequence of the three disciplines, in the future rapping will be part of our horses' lives.

In addition, if the cross country comes last, riders may be more willing to press tired horses. At present, competitors conserve their horses during the cross-country phase, knowing that they must present their horses at the final vet check and then jump a stadium course. The historical sequence of the three parts of eventing served to protect the well-being of our horses. If we change that sequence, will our horses be safeguarded as well as in the past? I think not.

We need rules to protect our horses and to provide a level playing field for us. But we need to very carefully think through the effect of proposed rule changes because every time we change the rules, we change the sport. We may want to change our sport, but it should happen on purpose, not by accident. Accidental and unintended effects can cause accidents, and we want to prevent accidents, not cause them. ♦



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EQUITATION: ITS RELEVANCE TODAY

A dynamic photograph of a dark horse and its rider in equestrian attire leaping over a yellow and black striped jump. The horse is in mid-air, front legs tucked, with a white blaze on its forehead. The rider wears a black helmet and a dark jacket with blue piping. In the background, other jumps and spectators are visible in a blurred setting.

Pointing to the success of Kelli Cruciotti, Olympian Peter Wylde analyzes the benefits of this division when making the transition to bigger jumps.

By Peter Wylde

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CHAMOIS
KELLI
JUMP
TIME

A t a recent U.S. Hunter Jumper Association Town Hall meeting, President Bill Moroney led a discussion about the path for the young generation of riders. Citing the lack of opportunities for juniors who did not have huge backing, we discussed options for undiscovered riders and programs to help them achieve what sometimes appear to be unattainable goals.

Of course, we talked about the organization's Emerging Athletes Program and the successes of its graduates. Many have heard about the meteoric experience of Jacob Pope, 2011 EAP Champion, who went on to win both the U.S. Equestrian Federation Show Jumping Talent Search Finals—East and the ASPCA Maclay National Championship. Stephen Foran, 2012 EAP champion, is now competing in Europe, showing top young horses for legendary horseman and trainer Henk Nooren of the Netherlands. Stephen is gaining invaluable experience that would otherwise not be available to him.

What's interesting about both of these young riders and countless others is that a big part of their education and foundation came from competing in equitation rings. Although they did not have funding to own top equitation horses, through their commitment to the sport they were able to get themselves mounted and gain great experience. They worked hard for what they achieved and often made sacrifices in their lives to further their careers.

Competing successfully in equitation and, of course, winning any of the finals used to be considered a steppingstone for junior riders to move onto the grand prix circuit and eventually to ride for the U.S. Equestrian Team. There is a long list of American riders who rose through the equitation ranks to join the upper echelons of athletes representing the United States in international competition.

LEFT: Kelli Cruciotti and Chamonix H won the 2015 \$100,000 Sapphire Grand Prix of Devon in May.

BETWEEN: Peter Wylde and Kelli take walking the course seriously. "We love the strategizing of our plan, especially the jumpoff route," he says. "We count strides up to nine so there is a lot to do in the course walk."

But since I returned from Europe two years ago, many people have asked me and I've even asked myself, "Is the Junior Equitation division still relevant today?" They wonder about its value. Some are critical of the direction the division has taken. Is it a necessary educational experience for a future grand prix star or an end in itself? Are we teaching junior riders to ride well and be great competitors?

My answer is that the equitation division can be as positive or negative an experience as a rider wants to make it. How to approach the equitation division is up to every individual. Is it an end? An enjoyment for the weekend rider? Or does it educate and prepare a junior for bigger things?



FAR LEFT © AMY DRAGO/AMIMMEDIA; LEFT © NANCY JAFFER



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ABOVE: Kelli rides Monterrey in the 2015 Platinum Performance USEF Show Jumping Talent Search Final at the Winter Equestrian Festival.

LEFT: As the jumps got higher, one of the changes Peter made in Kelli's riding is a slight adjustment in her equitation position: Here on Zorro, her center of balance is adjusted slightly more vertical and her release becomes more giving and fluid.

Kelli Cruciotti: Setting Goals

In the past year, I have been working closely with junior rider Kelli Cruciotti and her mother,

Cindy, who trains Kelli, to help her make the transition from the equitation ring to riding in larger jumper classes. Kelli, 17, is a very successful equitation rider, finishing second in the 2013 ASPCA Maclay National Championship. Cindy, head trainer and owner of Serenity Farm Show Stables

While it is up to each rider to decide about the equitation division, I believe that it is completely relevant for the same reasons it always has been. It is a helpful path for junior riders to take, giving them an education and experience that will eventually lead them to bigger and better things.

in Elizabeth, Colorado, has done an amazing job teaching Kelli the foundations of riding and giving her an invaluable education. With my international jumper experience, my job has been to help Kelli take what she has learned and focus her talent toward the grand prix ring. The journey has been successful, with Kelli most recently winning her first grand prix—the \$100,000 Sapphire Grand Prix of Devon with Chamonix H in May.

There are many reasons why I have enjoyed working with the Cruciottis. First and foremost, they love horses and they love riding, and competition comes second to the welfare of the animal. This has always been my mantra. Our similar approach to the sport allowed us to plan the way we wanted to manage the transition from equitation to grand prix as a team.

We made goals for Kelli and her horses, and we have used the equitation division to make the transition to the jumper ring successful. We chose to pursue equitation in an educational and competitive way, always putting the horse's welfare at

the forefront. The horse is at the core of our planning. We pick the most important events for the horse to compete in during a calendar year and then decide how to prepare for that goal. Instead of trying to do as many shows as possible, we pick competitions to help the horses peak at the right time—I did this when I was planning for any big championship, including the Olympics. This applies to any division, whether it's equitation, jumpers or hunters. It also pertains to any level of riding, whether the goal is for the grand prix ring or a year-end local championship.

Another aspect of our training program is that we avoid drilling. Everyone loves to train, but we make our program for any given horse based on the question, "How much should the horse do?" We have ongoing conversations about each horse. Factors we consider include longevity of the horse's career and trying to produce the best quality of a horse's performance. Part of equitation—or horsemanship, if you will—is understanding how to produce the best rounds possible. Regardless of discipline or level, if the horse becomes disinterested due to overuse, the quality of his performance is compromised.

Position: Connect, Don't Perch

For me there are three major educational values to the equitation division. The most basic part is position. I say this cautiously because I find sometimes that position is put ahead of great riding, and those two things don't always go hand in hand. Having said that, form should follow function and a classically good position should allow the rider to be fluid and in perfect harmony with the horse. I've noticed there's a fair amount of equitation riding that has the rider perched on top of the horse rather than being connected with the horse. This is a difference in technique and in mentality. A perched rider has a physical disconnect—sitting or perching above the horse—as well as a frame of mind in which he or she doesn't understand or know what the horse is thinking. When a rider is completely

Kelli Cruciotti: Making Perfect Moments

When asked about her riding accomplishments, 17-year-old Kelli Cruciotti recalls her journey with fondness, from the ponies that helped teach her as a small child to the horses who have carried her to many top placings this year, including wins at the \$100,000 Sapphire Grand Prix of Devon and the \$25,000 Artisan Farms 25 and Under Grand Prix Series at the Winter Equestrian Festival. Of her surprise Devon win, she says, "Winning any class at this level is exciting, but to win a class as prestigious as this is a dream come true."

Exuding quiet confidence, Kelli credits three things for giving her the solid foundation and preparation necessary for her recent transition to the more difficult and challenging grand prix courses: Her mother Cindy's training program at their Serenity Farm Show Stables in Elizabeth, Colorado; time spent in the equitation division and the gradual progression through the Junior Jumper ranks.

Although Kelli admits to getting nervous before going into the ring, she loves pressure situations and counts on two things to help manage her nerves: She does her homework and channels her nerves into positive energy—before entering the ring, she closes her eyes and visualizes the course and how she wants to ride it, which she then uses to address the questions that each course presents.

Kelli is circumspect about the transition to the bigger classes, citing some important lessons she has learned along the way. First, not every day is going to go her way so she's had to learn to relax and enjoy the ride.

Next is learning to modify her equitation position to be more supportive of her horse inside the bigger combinations and at the wider oxers in bigger jumping classes. "Peter [Wylde's] expertise in riding the big tracks has helped me to adjust my body angle and my timing to help the horses measure the width of the oxers and get across them so as not to have the back rail down," she says. Approaching the fences, she is more on the vertical with her upper body, which has helped her timing in front of the jumps.

The last important lesson is to count to nine. For years Cindy had been encouraging Kelli to practice counting strides in the long bending lines to help measure the correct distance, but she chose to depend on her eye most of the time to make a distance work out. "This year," Kelli noted with a smile, "the one weakness that was consistent in all of my courses was, of course, the long bends. So I practiced and practiced and made myself count the bends on course and I improved a lot."

Kelli hopes to further develop her knowledge and ability, ultimately becoming not just a good rider but a great horsewoman as well. She plans to achieve this via top barn management, advocating and ensuring horse welfare and giving back to the sport by being involved with the development of the many educational programs that are available to developing riders. Of course, she'd also like to compete at the highest levels of the sport and one day represent the United States in team and individual competitions.

One of Kelli's favorite quotes is "Don't wait for the perfect moment; take the moment and make it perfect." Explaining why, she says, "I really believe in this quote because it is up to us to make our own destiny. We are all given a gift in life. We choose how to use that gift and to make the most of it. Our personal successes and failures in life are no one else's responsibility but our own. So instead of waiting for perfection to be bestowed upon us, we must take what we have been given and work hard and make it perfect."



Kelli Cruciotti and Zorro

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As the jumps become higher, the stirrups get shorter and the release is more giving. Kelli's eyes are up and looking forward to the next jump. Both Kelli and Wallenberg are giving their best.

connected to the horse, he or she can work as one with him, anticipating his every move and helping him perform his best. The significance of a rider connected to her horse, rather than in a perched position, becomes more valuable as the courses become higher and more difficult.

We have worked on this concept a lot with Kelli, and it has really helped her horses to perform. In addition to a naturally correct position, one of the things I love about Kelli is how together she is with her horses. Over time her position has matured and she has learned to be completely connected to her horses when she rides. She has three very good jumpers, and all three have evolved dramatically due to her sophisticated riding. They've improved steadily month after month because Kelli has incredible harmony

with them. She is a soft, quiet and compassionate rider—she literally melts into them—and her style makes them relaxed and confident and allows them to jump to the best of their ability. This is something that all riders can practice and strive for, whether they are competing at the highest levels or a schooling show or even training at home.

The Benefits Of Technical Riding

The second, and I would argue, most important educational tool of the equitation division is that it teaches riders about the subtleties of riding a course. Equitation riders learn pace, angle, number of strides and approach to a fence. They learn how to walk and analyze a course. They learn to ride a course with an even stride and find distances out of rhythm. This becomes extremely valuable when riding fast jumpoffs as the quickest turns are the smoothest. All of these skills bring riders to a more sophisticated way of riding. I find this part of the equitation division's

education to be the most valuable aspect that helps any rider make the transition to higher-level jumping. By learning to ride the intricacies of a course, to break down and negotiate the technical aspects, be they related or unrelated distances, bending lines etc., equitation training prepares a rider to approach any course, anywhere with an educated eye and the ability to craft a plan that suits both horse and rider. This isn't just true of young riders. Adults returning to or just beginning to ride can benefit from the many adult equitation divisions even if they plan to compete in hunters or jumpers.

The Ability to Perform Under Pressure

The third educational aspect of the equitation division is the knowledge and ability it gives a rider to perform under pressure. There are so many interesting equitation classes these days: the George Morris Excellence in Equitation, the R.W. "Ronnie" Mutch Equitation Championship, the USEF Talent Search Finals, the Maclay

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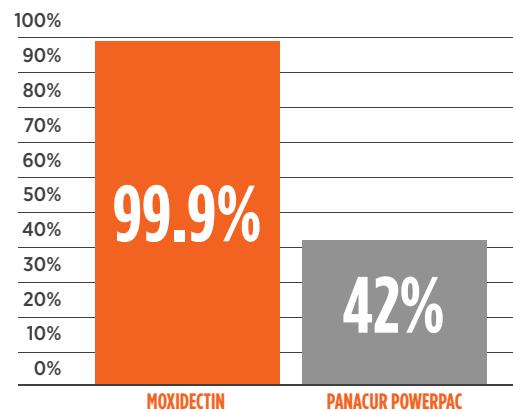
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¹ American Association of Equine Practitioners. AAEP Parasite Control Guidelines. Available at: <http://www.aaep.org/custdocs/ParasiteControlGuidelinesFinal.pdf>. Updated 2013. Accessed January 12, 2015.

² Kaplan RM. Anthelmintic resistance in nematodes of horses. *Vet Res* 2002;33:491-507.

³ Mason ME, Voris ND, Ortis HA, Geeding AA, Kaplan RM. Comparison of a single dose of moxidectin and a five-day course of fenbendazole to reduce and suppress cyathostomin fecal egg counts in a herd of embryo transfer-recipient mares. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2014;245(8):944-951.

*This study compared QUEST (moxidectin) Gel with Panacur Powerpac (fenbendazole).

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In the approach to the fence, Kelli has a soft guiding connection to the mouth. Her heel is down and underneath her. And her body is in a supportive position to keep Zorro in front of her and allow him to set himself in front of the fence and jump up in front of her.

valuable to their ability to perform under pressure. It's important to teach riders to be comfortable under pressure, and there is no doubt that the equitation division gives kids a leg up on that. Sometimes athletes can choke under such stress, and others can thrive on it. Take Olympic gold medalist Beezie Madden. She is the epitome of grace when the stakes are high. This ability to perform and be perfect under an immense blanket of expectations is what makes a great rider a superstar. I'm not sure grace under pressure is something

Finals, the Washington International Horse Show Equitation Classic Final, the USEF National Hunter Seat Medal Final. All of these classes are at big venues, some under lights, some indoors. The exposure of young riders to these competitions is

you can always teach, but you can certainly work on making it better. As a trainer you can provide aid by working with students to instill confidence and remove the dread of failure. Confidence comes easier to some than others, but people who are really talented and want to win usually find a way to get around the nerves.

I believe that there are many positive things about the equitation division and what it offers our junior riders. It is a system that is at the core of educating young riders to ride well and understand quality riding so that when they advance to the jumper ring, they get there as thoughtful, polished, competitive and successful riders. How you approach the equitation division is a personal decision. It can be as positive or negative as you want to make it. For Kelli, we have used the foundation of the equitation division and applied it to higher level jumping. The equitation ring has been a necessary steppingstone, which has helped her advance successfully to the grand-prix level.

We can be very proud as a country that we have this equitation system to

educate our young riders. The American style of riding is admired throughout the world, and the depth in talent of our young riders today is evidence that we are still very much on the right track. ☘

After winning the 1982 ASPCA Maclay National Championship, Peter Wylde had many successes in the jumper ring. He won the 1999 individual and team silver medals at the Pan American Games in Winnipeg, Canada, with Manganudo De Niro. A year later, he moved to Germany, where he ran his own stable for about 12 years. There he continued his winning ways. In 2002, he won the individual bronze medal and Best Horse honor for Fein Cera at the World Equestrian Games in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain. The pair helped bring home a team gold medal at the 2004 Athens Olympics.

A few years ago, Peter returned to the United States and established a riding and training business, Mullenders & Wylde Horses Inc., located at Winley Farm in Millbrook, New York. He also serves as the vice president and lead clinician of the USHJA Emerging Athletes Program.



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A MUSTANG ADVOCATE TAKES ON ROLEX



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Elisa Wallace gives a demonstration with two of her American Mustangs, Fledge (left) and Rune, at the 2015 Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event to help raise awareness about the plight—and trainability—of wild Mustangs.

Elisa Wallace won the Extreme Mustang Makeover and then made a successful comeback to the upper levels of eventing.

By Jenni Autry

When you've ridden bareback in front of thousands of clapping, cheering, whistling spectators on a formerly wild Mustang with only 120 days of training and just a rope to hold onto, the butterflies you battle while competing at the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event seem easier to tamp down.

That's how upper-level eventing rider and Mustang ambassador Elisa Wallace explained the feeling of going into the electric Rolex stadium on the final day of the competition last April. After jumping clear on cross country in the pouring rain the day before, Elisa found a top-10 finish at her first four-star event within her grasp.

It was the culmination of a long journey, one that began when her father and fellow upper-level event rider, Rick Wallace, first placed her on a horse's back at age 2. She was eventing by 4, and though Elisa did a stint in the hunter world—qualifying for and competing at the ASPCA Maclay National Championship in 1995—she ultimately returned to her first love.

As is often said in eventing, it's a sport of high highs and low lows, both of which Elisa, 33, of Jasper, Georgia, has experienced in her quest to reach the top. She produced two horses to the three-star level nearly a decade ago: Jackson, a Thoroughbred gelding she bought off the Internet for \$700 as a yearling, and Leap of Faith, a promising Thoroughbred/Holsteiner mare.

But both horses suffered career-ending injuries, with Jackson's occurring just two weeks before Elisa planned to travel with him to England to compete at the 2007 Blenheim Palace International Horse Trials.

More Doors, More Windows

Without any top horses to compete, Elisa focused on training young prospects, hoping one might be her next big star. What she never expected was to become an advocate for American Mustangs along the way. As she puts it: "There are always more ways than one to get back to the top—more doors and more windows."

There are roughly 30,000 to 35,000 wild Mustangs living in the western United States, with about another 50,000 kept in holding pens run by the Bureau of Land Management. Organizations like the Mustang Heritage Foundation seek to promote adoption of these horses through competitions like Mustang Million and Extreme Mustang Makeover.

Elisa didn't know about the plight of American Mustangs until her friend Rebecca Bowman encouraged her to adopt one and enter the 2012 Extreme Mustang Makeover in Clemson, South

Clearing the famous Head of the Lake with Simply Priceless was one of Elisa's favorite moments at Rolex.

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ABOVE: Karen O'Connor, who helped Elisa and Johnny prepare for Rolex, gives Elisa a high-five after the dressage test.

LEFT: Elisa celebrates after her dressage test during which Johnny stayed focused and relaxed.

before she asks him to gallop around the ring with her arms outstretched.

Training Mustangs ultimately taught Elisa more than she ever thought possible about herself, the spirit of horses and eventing. "With your Advanced horses and your Mustangs, you have the same relationship because there's such a huge amount of trust," she said.

"With the Mustangs, they have to give up and trust you and let go, and so do the event horses. They have to trust us that we're going to make it on the other side of the fence. And we have to be willing to trust them, too. You're saying, 'I'm trusting you, buddy. Now please trust me.' You have to be willing to do what you're asking your horse to do, and that can be the hardest thing."

A Return to the Top

Elisa's chance to return to the upper levels of eventing came a year after the Extreme Mustang Makeover when she met Simply Priceless, a 13-year-old Australian Thoroughbred gelding. "Johnny," owned by David and Jill Hopcroft, had competed at the three-star level on the West Coast before coming east to recover from an injury.

While the Hopcrofts originally ap-

Carolina, where trainers put 120 days of training on a Mustang and then auction the horse to raise awareness for the breed.

With no upper-level horses in her barn at her training base, Rosemarie Spillane's Rock Creek Farms in Jasper, Elisa decided to give it a go. "I signed up, picked up my Mustang, brought him home," she said. He was a stallion so "I thought, 'Great, my barn owner is really going to think I'm crazy.' A lot of people did think that."

She had the stallion gelded and named him Fledge—after the magician's nephew in *The Chronicles of Narnia* series—and began working to develop a bond. After years of enduring the ups and downs of trying to get back to the highest levels of eventing, Elisa found herself having fun again with a horse.

"The thing with horses is you have to find what makes you happy at the end of the day. The bottom line is it's about being with horses and enjoying horses," she said. "That's what's great about the Mustangs.

You can go back to being a kid and playing with your horses. I think a lot of times people forget to do that."

Elisa and Fledge placed third in both the handling class of the Extreme Mustang Makeover and the trail class to qualify for the finals, where the trainers and Mustangs perform a freestyle demonstration in front of a boisterous crowd. She rode Fledge bareback with just a neck rope, which many of the trainers use to show a level of trust and communication, she said.

Would Fledge listen to her cues despite the distraction of the crowd? "I had no idea what to expect going in, but Fledge fed off the atmosphere," Elisa said. "The more people clapped, the better he got." They performed movements like piaffe and sliding stops and jumped over three verticals in the middle of the ring.

In the video of their freestyle, which has since been viewed nearly 250,000 times on YouTube, you see Elisa give Fledge a reassuring pat on the shoulder

© EMILY DAILY

proached Elisa's father about taking the ride on Johnny, he was busy campaigning his own three-star horse at the time. Since Elisa was competing only one horse at the Novice level then, she decided to take the ride. That decision ultimately set her on a path for Rolex.

"He's tricky and quirky, but I always had faith. I just knew he was a Rolex horse," Elisa said. "That was the goal. For the past two years since I had my first ride on him, I always had Rolex in mind. My whole schedule with him was directed toward getting there."

When Johnny arrived at Rock Creek Farms, Elisa worked on establishing a bond with him—the same type of relationship-building she does when developing a partnership with a new Mustang.

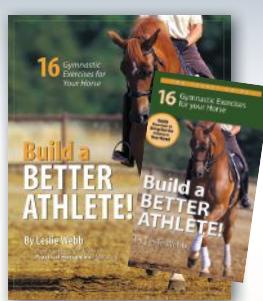
"At home, people see Johnny and say he's like a puppy dog, but he's a completely different creature at horse shows. His nerves kick in, and I say, 'Just wait until the switch flips,'" she said. But, as it often goes with horses that make it to the top levels of eventing, "that switch is what makes him such a good cross-country horse."

Going to Rolex

Elisa and Johnny placed third in their first CIC*** competition at Chattahoochee Hills in Fairburn, Georgia, in May 2014 and eighth in their first CCI*** at the Bromont International Three-Day Event in Quebec one month later. An eighth-place finish at Red Hills CIC*** in Tallahassee, Florida, this past March qualified them for Rolex.

But that proved only half the battle. Considering Johnny's history of nerves in dressage and show jumping, Elisa worried the Rolex stadium at the Kentucky Horse Park, which seats about 10,000 exuberant fans, would be his undoing.

"I thought for sure the atmosphere was going to cause him to explode, so I took him somewhere every weekend, whether it was to a schooling show or a different farm," Elisa said. "The idea was to expose him to as many places as I could."



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Elisa and Johnny had five rails down in the stadium phase of Rolex to finish 17th overall, but U.S. Team Coach David O'Connor said the issues were "100 percent fixable."

ing in eventing in 2012 but continues to coach a number of students. She watched Elisa and Johnny at a competition in Ocala, Florida, and had a few ideas to try.

Johnny reminded Karen of Prince Panache, the Thoroughbred gelding with whom she won Rolex in 1999 in addition to a team bronze medal at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. They decided to try some of the same exercises with Johnny that Karen had successfully used with "Nash."

One of the biggest obstacles proved to be Johnny's reaction to entering the dressage arena. He would stay relaxed outside the ring, but as soon as Elisa started to go down centerline, he would become tense and nervous, which snowballed through-

Two weeks before the event, Elisa called Karen O'Connor to ask for help. Karen, a multiple Olympic, World and Pan American Games medalist, retired from compet-

out the remainder of the test.

"Karen opened both ends of her dressage arena at C and A. We worked mostly at the canter because that helped him relax better, and she would have me work on lead changes and small circles outside the ring," Elisa said. "Then we would come back in and canter down the centerline. We did that over and over, and he got to where he would take a deep breath and relax coming into the ring."

They also worked on establishing the right connection. Karen had said, "It's not what the horse's mouth feels like, it's how your hand feels to the horse's mouth." The phrase stood out as a light-bulb moment for Elisa.

"When you go to make contact, your first reaction is to think, 'My horse feels heavy,' as opposed to thinking, 'What do I feel like to my horse?'" Elisa said. "Karen would tell me to soften my elbows, which kept my hands steady and allowed the connection to stay softer. By keeping a soft connection with him and not allowing him to disappear, he would come up to the bridle and meet me."

Elisa and Johnny spent a lot of time on a 20-meter circle under Karen's watchful eye in their final preparation for Rolex, moving through different lateral exercises like shoulder-in, haunches-in and renvers.

All the while, Karen repeated the same mantras: "We want him to be accepting of our aids. No matter where we put him, we're going to make him feel balanced and secure. We want him to understand everything we are asking of him."

"Going into Rolex, we had a plan," Elisa said. "Karen had faith that I could lay down a really good score in the dressage, but you never know until you get there."

'Nailed It!'

Elisa and Johnny drew an early position in the order of go at Rolex, which meant they would perform their dressage test on the Thursday of the event. With Karen's exercises helping them both to stay relaxed in warm-up, Elisa and Johnny entered the Rolex stadium. "Normally he's looking for an excuse to be scared or worried, but he just stayed with me the whole time," Elisa said. "In the serpentine [toward the end of the test], I started smiling because it was actually fun."

Elisa and Johnny scored 50.8 in their first ever four-star dressage test to sit in fifth place at the end of the first day of the competition. Karen high-fived her as they left the ring and tweeted "Nailed it!"

But their work was far from over. Cross country loomed ahead with a forecasted 90 percent chance of rain. The riders were buzzing about Derek di Grazia's course, which nearly all agreed was bigger and more formidable than in years past.

Elisa walked the course four times to hash out her strategy, including once with Karen. "Karen was very adamant about coming in with a plan. It's a four-star course. You can't just go in expecting things to fall into place," Elisa said.

Setting up for a jump through the turn became a major theme on their course walk. "We talked about squaring up your horse in a turn to make sure the horse's shoulders are straight to the jump," Elisa said. "It's especially important to make

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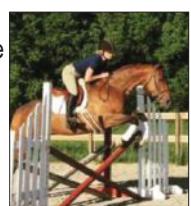
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sure your horse's shoulders are straight in combinations. If not, you can get in trouble and have your horse hang a leg."

Karen gave Elisa certain jobs to do around the course: "Give Johnny a little tap behind your leg when you come to the Head of the Lake. There's a lot to look at there with the big crowd." And "Evaluate how he is feeling on the back side of the course after the Hollow. You can catch your breath there."

"Before I went out of the start box, [Karen] sent me a text: 'Don't let anyone take it away from you,'" Elisa said. "To me that meant: It's your course. You need to own it, and you need to take control of it. I went in with the mindset that I was going to attack the course."

Heavy rains fell as Elisa and Johnny left the start box, and she focused on settling into a rhythm and executing her plan: "In those types of conditions, you just have to ride your butt off."

Clearing the famous Head of the Lake stands out as one of Elisa's favorite memories. "I was a little worried about that, but my horse read it perfectly," she said. "Landing after the last jump and hearing the crowd roar—that was amazing. That gets you pumped up."

Elisa channeled that energy around the rest of the course. "It was an amazing feeling to get to the finish. You go through all of these emotions. There's anxiety mixed with adrenaline, and it's thrilling to realize you've done it," Elisa said. "I got off and just started hugging everyone."

They had jumped clear around their first four-star course, accumulating just 7.2 time penalties to sit in 12th place as the best Rolex rookies after cross country. But there wasn't much time to savor that victory. Johnny had to face the Rolex stadium once more the next day.

Show jumping has been a challenging phase for Johnny, both because of his nerves and because of his technique over the fences, Elisa said. "He tends to hollow

a little bit, which makes his job harder."

Johnny looked and felt great the next morning at the final horse inspection. Elisa walked the course with Karen and found that Johnny's energy level seemed good as they started warming him up for show jumping: "I felt like I had a fair amount of horse and gas left in the tank."

Knocking on the Door

Elisa and Johnny had five rails down in show jumping to finish 17th, completing the event as the highest-placed Rolex rookies. "When I came out of the ring, [U.S. Team Coach] David O'Connor told me, 'Don't worry about it. It's OK. It's 100

there,'" she said. "You set your goals when you have big dreams, and you need to have those goals whether they are short-term or long-term. Then you take it one step at a time and keep plugging away."

There are countless people to thank for helping Elisa accomplish the lifelong dream of getting to Rolex: her parents, Rick and Laura; her husband, Timothy Harfield; Karen O'Connor; and Rebecca Bowman, who introduced her to the Mustangs that ended up playing an integral role in the journey.

Elisa ultimately purchased Fledge at the auction at the conclusion of the Extreme Mustang Makeover. Now he accompanies

her to demonstrations along the East Coast—including this year's Rolex, where she presented a demo in addition to competing with Johnny—to help raise awareness for American Mustangs.

She continues to adopt and train Mustangs, competing in competitions like the Mustang Million with Rune and Ninh and most recently with a gray mare named Hwin at Mustang Magic in Fort Worth, Texas, which pits past top-placing Extreme Mustang Makeover trainers against each other.

Elisa once again ditched her tack and rode Hwin bareback with just a neck rope for the freestyle. They performed flying changes, canter half passes and passage and cleared a 4-foot brick wall in front of a sold-out crowd of nearly 3,000 at the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo in January, ultimately finishing fourth.

Now Elisa hopes to combine her two worlds and take a Mustang to the upper levels of eventing. Hwin in particular shows enough scope over fences to make Elisa think she might have what it takes. "I always like to root for the underdogs," she said. "If a horse has four legs and a big heart and enjoys his job, they can do a lot."

It's a fact she knows firsthand. ☐



Elisa and Johnny's support team cheered them on during the stadium phase at Rolex: (from left) groom and photographer Aly Rattazzi; Parker Miller; her father, Rick Wallace; Briggs Surrat; trainer Karen O'Connor; Johnny's owners, Jill and David Hopcroft; and Elisa's husband, Timothy Harfield.

percent fixable." That helped soften the blow, she said.

"It still punches you in the gut, but that's what you love about the sport. It's more about being competitive with yourself and being a better rider within yourself," Elisa said. "It was awesome to compete against Michael Jung and William Fox-Pitt, and I accomplished my goal of finishing in the top 20. I was knocking on the door, and I wasn't that far away."

With that in mind, Elisa hopes to take Johnny to Blenheim this fall, the same event she aimed to compete at nearly a decade ago with Jackson. "It's funny to think that nine years ago I was trying to go

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Photo: Carol Walker; Illustration: Celia Strain

LEARN TO LET GO

Transform your horse's muscle structure and performance by riding back to front with lighter contact.

By Anne Kenan ■ Illustrations by Sandy Rabinowitz

When you look at the silhouette of a well-ridden horse, you see a nice round shape from his poll to his tail. His chest and topline are well muscled, and he appears both physically and mentally relaxed. When he moves, he coils his loin muscles and raises the base of his neck, allowing his back and shoulders to swing freely and his hind legs to step underneath his body in long, powerful steps. And because he's allowed to use his head and neck for balance, he travels in beautiful self-carriage and jumps with his greatest natural talent.

Unfortunately, I see far too many horses in shows and clinics with incorrect muscle structure caused by improper contact. Two dominant versions of faulty contact are horses traveling with raised heads and shortened necks and those who are overflexed at the poll while behind the rider's leg. Both cause tension in the horse and a lack of back use, and they produce unnatural gaits, lackluster jumps (unless the horse is a real athlete) and unhappy attitudes. And in my opinion, they are one of several reasons why we live

in an era of rampant drug abuse for both mental and physical soundness.

A horse's muscle structure is affected by rein contact. Riding on contact when a horse is not physically strong enough or when a rider's aids do not work as independently as they could are very common mistakes. Some people ride horses forward into a closed "front door"—strong, firm hands, forcing a fixed headset—or they use gimmicks like draw reins. In reality, the only way to allow horses to truly relax and swing their backs is to give them enough rein freedom to feel safe to stretch their heads and necks forward and down. Horses use their heads and necks to balance, and they can't use their backs unless they lower their heads.

To encourage your horse to develop this longer, rounder structure, you first need to balance your own body so you never risk interfering with his balance and

One way to begin riding your horse from back to front is to create three speeds at each gait (see text page 43). Start by riding the walk with little or no rein contact. Imagine that your horse is a bicycle that you need to keep centered and upright on a dotted line stretching out in front of you. Walk forward purposefully, asking your horse to maintain his momentum just as you would pedal to keep the bicycle upright. Hold your arms out in front of you with your shoulders back and square.



Work With Your Horse

Progress ends whenever you start working against your horse instead of with him. At the beginning of each ride, evaluate his mood and energy level. If he feels a little fresh, let him walk at his own pace for a few minutes instead of trying to direct and control him. Then quietly ask him to halt and stand still for a moment. Soften your hands and ride him forward into walk from your legs. Repeat this two or three times until you feel him reset—take a deep breath and relax. Now he's ready to focus on the ride.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, if your horse starts a ride on the sluggish side, practice your transitions within the gaits to create more energy. As you put leg on to ride him forward, always think "power" rather than "speed."

learn to let go. Allowing him to use his entire body and swing his shoulders freely will build his long muscles and help him begin to stabilize his balance. Whether your horse is young and green or older and in need of retraining, together you and he can learn to balance yourselves without using the reins to lean on each other and then gradually develop a light, noninterfering contact.

With patience and consistency, you can reach the ultimate goal of riding your horse from back to front: creating and channeling his energy primarily with your legs and seat and receiving it in a light,

elastic rein connection.

In the following three exercises, I'll talk you through the steps of this process.

Exercise 1: Ride Without Riding

Start by focusing on your own strength and balance. You can work a lot on this when you're not even on your horse. The following exercise will improve your balance and align your shoulders over your heels by creating the correct angles and flexion in your ankles, knees and hips. This will help you to develop a functional, secure position in the saddle. I find it especially beneficial for people who ride only a few times per week.

1. Stand facing stairs or a mounting block. Step up onto the bottom stair or the top of the block and move your feet

sign—it means you're building muscle tone. But don't overdo it. Repeat the exercise several times a week, gradually lengthening the duration as your strength increases.

3. When the exercise starts to feel easier, try holding the two-point position on the step while bringing your arms in front of you. Hold them horizontally with your elbows straight and fists closed. Continue to look ahead and keep breathing. This adds a core-strengthening component to the exercise. Again, hold this pose as long as you can comfortably, then gradually lengthen that duration over time.

Exercise 2: Balance In Two-Point

The next step is to transfer the strength and balance you're developing on the ground into a secure, balanced position in

With patience and consistency, you can reach the ultimate goal of riding your horse from back to front: creating and channeling his energy primarily with your legs and seat and receiving it in a light, elastic rein connection.

backward until you're balancing on the balls of your feet and hanging your heels over the edge as if you are preparing to do a back dive off a diving board. Hold your arms out to your sides for balance.

2. Looking directly ahead with soft eyes and taking deep, slow breaths, bend your knees and hips as if you are kneeling down to pray. Lower your body until you're simulating two-point position with your knee and hip angles closed, your ankles mildly flexed and your upper body slightly inclined. Focus on balancing your weight over the balls of your feet. Then hold that position for as long as you can comfortably. You may feel the muscles in your thighs begin to burn. This is a good

the saddle so that you never feel tempted to use your reins for balance. At the same time, you can begin teaching your horse to carry himself.

1. Sitting in the saddle at a standstill, soften your hands and allow your horse's neck to lengthen. If he walks, keep breathing and quietly bring him back to a halt. Then visualize exactly what you want him to do—stand still rather than walk—while you soften your hands again. If he continues to have trouble standing still, carry treats in your pocket and offer him one when he halts and stands quietly. I don't feed my horses a lot of treats, but I occasionally like to use them as a training aid.

2. When you can trust your horse to

stand still patiently with little to no rein contact, rise up into two-point position. Rest your hands halfway up his neck, but keep your weight balanced over your feet, just as you did in the unmounted exercise. Even standing still, look ahead with soft eyes. This will help you stay balanced. If you are strong enough, do this exercise without resting on your horse's neck. Keep your hands in front of you with a straight line from your elbow to the bit, following his head and neck.

3. Hold your two-point position as long as you can comfortably. Never push it to the point where you need to resort to a crutch—such as your reins—for balance. Concentrate on your lower-leg position. It should be steady and perpendicular to the ground. You'll learn to confirm this without looking in a mirror or asking a ground person for help. Simply feel how your lower leg affects your upper body. If your leg slips forward, your upper body will fall backward. If it slips backward, you'll tip onto your horse's neck. As your lower leg stabilizes, your upper body will too.

4. When you're ready, try this exercise at the walk. Sitting in the saddle, soften your hands, allowing your horse to lengthen his neck as much as he wants. If he speeds up, take a breath, then slow him down to your desired pace, using gentle rein pressure if necessary. Always visualize what you want him to do first. When you're happy with the pace, rise into your two-point position. Hold it only as long as you can comfortably. Meanwhile, keep the rein contact as light as possible.

If your horse slips off the imaginary bike track shown in the illustration on page 41 and riding him forward doesn't bring him back within a few strides, use gentle diagonal aids to nudge him in that direction. Think of yourself as an X, with your body in the center and your aids connected in diagonal pairs: left leg to right hand and right leg to left hand. So if he drifts off the track to the left, for example, guide him back on with your left leg and right hand.

This may feel strange to you—and to your horse—at first, but you'll both get the hang of it as you learn to balance independently of one another.

5. Gradually build up to riding in your two-point at the trot and canter on light to no contact.

Progressing through these steps may take time for both you and your horse. Particularly if he is accustomed to being held together with the reins, he may feel like a drunken sailor, wavering and unsteady, as you begin to feed him the reins. For many horses, learning self-carriage can be mentally and physically challenging. Be patient and as consistent as possible. Use the following exercise to guide him in the right direction without taking away his newfound freedom.

Exercise 3: Create Three Speeds at Each Gait

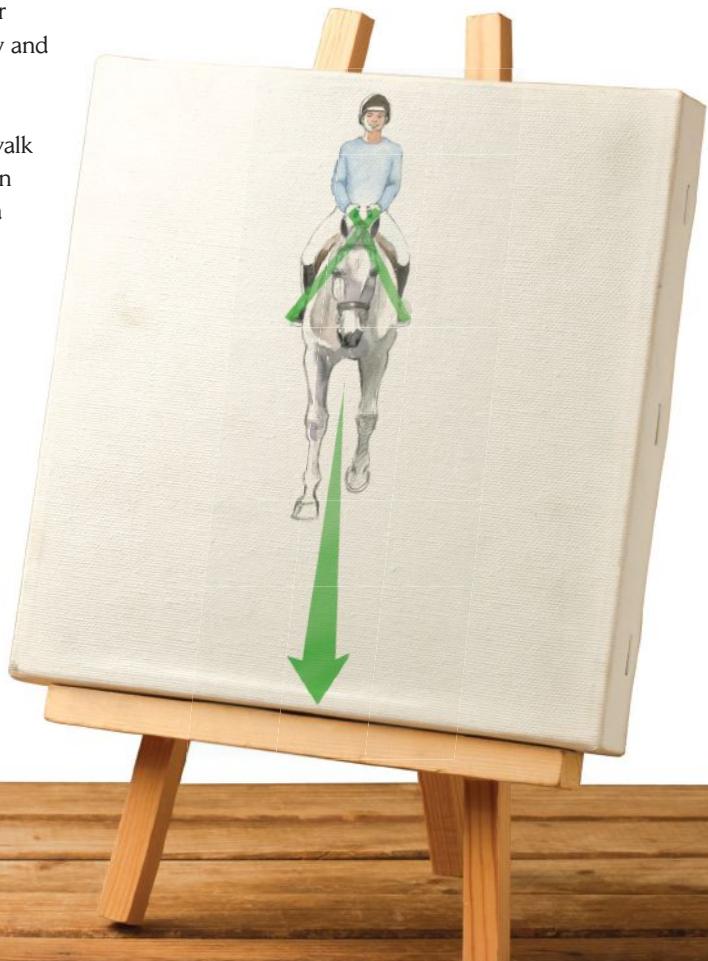
This exercise will help you ride more with your legs, seat—and eyes—than with your hands. By practicing adjusting your speed within each gait, you'll increase your horse's adjustability and responsiveness to subtle aids.

1. Start at the walk with little or no rein contact. Visualize a dotted line stretching out in front of you along the track you want to ride. Imagine

that your horse is a bicycle that you need to keep centered and upright on the dotted line. Hold your arms out in front of you—as you would to steady the bicycle's handlebars—with your shoulders back and square. Walk forward purposefully, asking your horse to maintain his momentum just as you would pedal to keep the bicycle upright.

If he slips off your imaginary dotted line with either his shoulders or haunches, keep your eyes focused on the line and ask him to go forward from your legs instead of correcting him with your reins immediately. If this doesn't bring him back on track within a few strides, use gentle diagonal aids to nudge him in that direction. Think of yourself as an X, with your body in the center and your aids connected in diagonal pairs: left leg to right hand and right leg to left hand. So, for example, if he drifts off the track to the left, guide him back on with your left leg and right hand.

2. As you walk, feel the four-beat rhythm and try to focus specifically on



your horse's hind feet. Soften your reins to allow him to stretch his neck forward so you feel like you have more horse in front of your legs than behind them. Then ask him to lengthen his stride for four or five strides. Think of riding his hind feet forward into bigger, more powerful steps. This will create more movement in the saddle than you may be used to so keep breathing, allowing your body to relax and follow the movement.

If your horse breaks into a trot, don't correct him immediately. Training horses is not a game of Simon Says. Our goal is more about producing quality movement than instant obedience. So if it's a nice balanced trot—he's not rushing forward or leaning on the reins—breathe, relax and allow him to continue for a few moments. Then visualize a downward transition, take a breath and ask him to come back to walk. This is "opportunistic riding": reinforcing quality work even when a horse produces it accidentally, a term I picked up reading Charles de Kunffy's *The Ethics*

and Passions of Dressage.

3. After the few strides of a bigger, longer walk, bring your horse back to a regular walk. Visualize the transition first, take a breath and think of your upper body as a sail on a sailboat, helping to control his speed and direction. As you take the breath, your upper body fills up the sail to slow down your horse; you don't need to immediately go to your rein aids. Think about relaxing into your positional angles—ankles, knees, hip and elbows—which absorb the power and energy of the horse. If your horse doesn't slow down, follow up with gentle rein pressure, but always use the reins as a last resort.

4. After several strides of regular walk, ask for a slower pace. Again, visualize the new pace before using rein aids, if necessary. Use only as much as you need and then soften the reins so he can stretch his neck and balance himself at this slightly slower pace. Proceed for four or five strides before asking him to go forward again to a regular walk.

As your horse learns to make these transitions with less and less rein input, you'll find yourself riding more off your leg—controlling his pace with mild adjustments in your leg pressure and shifts in your weight, but with very little rein contact.

Play with these three speeds within the walk until your horse

is responding primarily to your legs and seat. Then try the same thing at the trot and, eventually, the canter. Whenever he overreacts to your aids—breaking to canter when you're asking for a forward trot, for example, or breaking to trot when you ask for a more collected canter—check his balance. If it's good—he's not leaning onto your reins or losing his momentum completely—go with the pace he gives you. Allow him to take a breath and relax, then go back to the gait you'd intended.

In all three gaits, relax into your balanced position, feeling your horse's hind legs step underneath you and allowing him to stretch his neck forward and down. As he does, the base of his neck will lift and his loin muscles will coil, creating a rounder, more through frame—channeling his energy from his hindquarters through his entire body. Once he has stabilized his balance and strengthened his long muscles, you may be surprised by how readily he puts himself in the bridle—seeking a nice light contact with your hands. This is the happy result of riding a horse correctly from back to front. ♦

Hunter trainer, clinician and judge Anne Kenan has worked in the horse industry for more than 40 years. As a partner in Hunter Hill Farm, Inc., she co-hosted both local and A-rated shows in the Atlanta, Georgia, area for a decade. She has also bred, raised and trained national champion show hunters and taught young riding stars, such as Olympic show jumper Laura Kraut and leading hunter rider Holly Orlando. A USEF R judge for 20 years, Anne has expanded her equestrian services to include consulting and video reviews. To learn more, go to www.annekenan.com.

To ride a downward transition from a bigger walk to a regular walk, visualize the transition, take a breath and think of your upper body as a sail on a boat. As you breathe, your upper body fills the sail to slow down your horse.



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SELECTING HAY

Demystify that bale of hay to make sure your horse is getting the nutrition he needs.

By Elaine Pascoe with Krishona Martinson, PhD

How much thought do you give to the hay your horse eats? Maybe you view hay as a munchable snack that keeps him occupied or the salad course alongside his entrée of grain. The fact is that hay may be the most important part of his diet. The type and quality of hay your horse eats can make a big difference in his overall nutrition.

How can you be sure your horse gets what he needs from his hay? Read on for a five-point primer, assembled with help from Krishona Martinson, PhD, equine extension specialist and associate professor at the University of Minnesota. You'll find out how to choose the right hay for your horse.

Forage—mainly hay and pasture—keeps the horse's gut working normally, and it also is a major source of nutrients.

Equine nutritionists agree that forage, mainly hay and pasture, should make up most if not all of a horse's diet. The fiber in forage keeps his gut working normally, and forage is a major source of nutrients: energy, protein, vitamins and minerals. Beneficial bacteria in the horse's gut ferment forage fiber, breaking down materials like cellulose (the complex carbohydrate that makes up plant cell walls) into glucose and volatile fatty acids that provide fuel for body tissues.

Hay may not provide everything your horse needs, but the more

he relies on forage as opposed to grain, the better off he'll be. Any old hay won't do, though. What's right for another horse may not be right for yours.

Focus on Type and Quality

The nutrition provided by hay depends on many factors, Dr. Martinson says. Here are three:

Type: You can feed grass hay, legume hay or a mix of the two types. Less often, certain small grains—oats, wheat, barley—are harvested for horse hay. Legume hays typically provide more protein and calcium than grass or small-grain hays. Sometimes they provide more energy (that is, calories), too. Within the broad categories your choice is likely to be limited by what's available locally. Coastal bermudagrass grows well in southern states, for example, but not in colder regions. You're more likely to find cool-season grass hays—timothy, tall fescue, bromegrass or orchardgrass—in northern states. Alfalfa is the most widely available legume hay, followed by clover or, less often, lespedeza or birdsfoot trefoil.

Maturity: The growth stage of the forage at harvest affects hay quality regardless of type. Hay is easier to digest and more nutritious when it's harvested at the vegetative or pre-bloom stage, before the plants mature, flower and form seeds. Mature plants also make hay less palatable so more is likely to be wasted. With many cool-season grass hays, the first cutting of the season is most likely to contain seed heads, but it's the growth stage of the plants, not the cutting, that most affects quality.

Growing and harvest conditions:

Both drought and excessive rain can affect hay quality. Severe drought may increase concentrations of contaminants in some types of hay. Hay that's soaked by rain while curing can lose nutrients and become less palatable.

Pre-bloom alfalfa, properly cured and stored, probably packs the biggest



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ABOVE: The growing and harvest conditions affect hay quality, especially if there is drought or excessive rain.

ABOVE RIGHT: Cool-season grass hay can be soaked to remove some of the nonstructural carbohydrates then fed to horses with insulin resistance, equine metabolic syndrome or chronic laminitis.

RIGHT: Legume hays, such as alfalfa, typically provide more protein and calcium than grass or small-grain hays.



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nutritional punch of any hay—but that doesn't mean your horse should be getting it. He needs hay that fits his individual requirements based on his work level, body condition, stage of life and in some cases health issues. A few examples:

■ A steady diet of all-legume hay may provide more calories, protein and calcium than the average adult horse in light to moderate work requires. Good quality grass hay or a grass-legume blend suits most mature horses.

■ Mares in late pregnancy and lactation can use the extra nutrients provided by top-quality legume hay. So can thin horses that are being brought back to normal weight and aged horses that have trouble maintaining weight.

■ Overweight horses and those who seem to get fat on air will do better on more mature hay. Mature hay has fewer calories so the horse can munch more of it without gaining weight. Most horses easily consume 2 percent of their body weight in hay daily so a small reduction in calorie content can make a big difference. Your other option is to limit the horse's hay to

keep him trim, but limiting hay too much can lead to digestive problems and vices like wood chewing.

■ Mature grass-alfalfa mixed hay may be a good choice for horses with insulin resistance, equine metabolic syndrome or chronic laminitis, Dr. Martinson says. These horses have trouble processing the nonstructural carbohydrates (sugars and starches) in cool-season grasses and grains and they need a special diet. "Legumes and warm-season grasses tend to be lower in nonstructural carbohydrates compared to cool-season grasses," she says. If cool-season grass hay is your only option, you may need to soak it to remove some of the nonstructural carbohydrates.

■ Small-grain hay is useful for horses who suffer from hyperkalemic periodic paralysis, a genetic disorder that affects certain Quarter Horses and causes uncontrolled muscle contractions, weakness and even paralysis. These horses do better on low-potassium diets, and small-grain hays (especially oat hay) tend to have less potassium than grass or legume hays.

Some kinds of hay pose risks for cer-

tain horses. Tall fescue can be infected with an endophyte, a fungus that lives inside the plant, that causes foaling difficulties and lack of milk in broodmares, although it's harmless to other horses. Low-endophyte varieties are available.

Use Your Senses

How can you judge the quality of the hay you're buying? Start with a hands-on inspection, Dr. Martinson suggests. Break open a bale and pull a handful of hay from the middle. It should feel soft and flexible and have a sweet scent. A musty odor suggests mold. Take a close look:

■ Coarse stems and lots of large seed heads (in grass hay) or flowers (in legume hay) show that the hay was cut from mature plants. It may be less palatable, less digestible and provide less nutrition than hay cut when less mature. "Use this hay for horses with low caloric requirements," Dr. Martinson advises.

■ Leafiness is a mark of high quality. Leaves are more digestible than stems and provide more nutrition.

■ A greenish color indicates high levels of a precursor to vitamin A, but color alone isn't a sure indicator of quality. Pale color suggests the hay may have been bleached by the sun and lost some nutrients, but it can still be nourishing.

■ Dark brown or black color suggests the hay was baled with too much moisture. It may have molded; you may even find a film of black or white mold spores on the leaves. Moldy hay should never be fed.

■ Dusty hay is a health hazard. The dust can inflame the horse's airways and lead

to chronic breathing problems. Dust can also be a sign of mold in hay.

■ Weeds and other foreign materials are tip-offs to poor quality. A few stray weeds always find their way into hay, but they should be the exception—less than 10 percent of the total—and none should be poisonous. Check alfalfa hay carefully for the presence of toxic blister beetles, which can infest alfalfa fields (especially in drought years) and end up, crushed or whole, in baled hay. “Blister beetles are most commonly found in alfalfa hay that

horse hay supplier, and the horse owner has an established relationship with the hay supplier, then I would rely on the supplier’s analysis,” Dr. Martinson says.

If you’re arranging the tests, you’ll need to gather samples for the lab. The best way is to use a bale probe, a device with a hollow steel tube. Find one online or rent or borrow one through your county extension office or local feed store. There are manual versions and types that attach to a power drill. Push (or drill) 12 to 18 inches in from the butt end of a square

water) and “Dry Matter” (with moisture removed). “Horse owners should use the dry matter results,” Dr. Martinson says. Here are some important basic measures and the ranges she looks for:

■ Moisture, the amount of water in the hay: 10 to 17 percent. Below 10 percent, hay tends to be brittle and can be dusty; above 18 percent it may mold, and above 25 percent it may ferment. Fermentation produces heat, which can build to the point of combustion.

■ Equine digestible energy, the energy the horse can get from the hay: 0.76 to 1.0 Mcal per pound of hay for most types. Mcal stands for megacalories, or millions of calories.

■ Crude protein, the protein concentration: 8 to 14 percent in grass hays, 14 to 17 percent in mixed hays and 15 to over 20 percent in legume hays.

■ Acid detergent fiber, hard-to-digest components such as cellulose and lignin: 30 to 35 percent. The lower the ADF, the more digestible the nutrients in the hay are. Hay with ADF above 45 percent may have very little nutritional value.

■ Neutral detergent fiber, a measure of palatability: 40 to 50. Horses

Dark brown or black hay may have been baled with too much moisture and may have molded.

has flowered,” Dr. Martinson says.

Your inspection can tell you if the hay is likely to be suitable for your horse. Hay that smells sweet, has good color and texture and contains only the plants it’s supposed to contain is probably acceptable. But the only way to know what’s really in hay is to ...

Have It Tested

You can find published tables that list average nutritional values for grass and legume hays. But because hay varies in nutrition depending on where it was grown, when it was cut, how it was handled and other factors, the tables may not accurately reflect the hay you feed. A forage laboratory can analyze hay for basic nutrient content. Find one through your state’s cooperative extension service.

Be sure to request an equine analysis, Dr. Martinson advises, since most labs test forage for a range of livestock. A few labs, such as Equi-Analytical in Ithaca, New York, focus on testing horse forage.

Basic testing usually costs about \$20, and each lot of hay you buy should be tested separately. This isn’t a big expense if you buy by the ton. If you buy by the bale, in small quantities, ask your suppliers if they test. “If the supplier is a reputable

bale so that the probe passes through several flakes and extract your sample. Take samples from at least 10 percent of the bales and mingle them in a sealable plastic bag to send to the lab. If you can’t get a probe, grab handfuls of hay from the insides of representative bales.

Basic test results are usually reported in about a week; more detailed analyses may take longer. Values are usually listed in two columns: “As Sampled” (including



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to fuel moderate or hard work. It should still be the basis of the horse's diet, but he'll need concentrates for energy. Commercial concentrates also provide protein, minerals, vitamins and other essentials so in most cases other supplements aren't needed. Remember to consider the total diet—hay and grain—when you choose feed. If your hay is high in protein, you can complement it with a commercial mix lower in protein. If the hay is low in protein, try a higher protein grain mix.



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ABOVE: Hay must be stored in a properly protected, well-ventilated place to prevent spoilage and maintain its nutritional value.

LEFT: In addition to hay, all horses require supplemental salt to replenish what they lose in sweat.

Find the Balance

Knowing what's in the hay you feed will help you balance your horse's rations so that he gets the right amounts of energy, protein and minerals. You can do this using published nutritional tables (such as those in the National Research Council's *Nutrient Requirements of Horses*) or with the help of a qualified equine nutritionist. A nutritionist can be especially helpful for performance, breeding and growing horses and those with health issues. Your county extension office may be able to help you find one, and many feed companies provide this service.

Many types of hay provide enough calories and crude protein to meet the needs of adult horses at maintenance or light work. Even so, hay rarely meets all the needs of any horse. All horses require supplemental salt to replenish what is lost in sweat. Beyond that, even the best hay may be low in certain nutrients, especially minerals. For that reason, Dr. Martinson says, a horse who isn't fed a commercial grain product in amounts recommended on the feed-bag label should get a ration balancer in addition to his hay. Most commercial feed companies make these products, which are formulated to fill vitamin and mineral gaps in grass or legume hays.

Hay alone will lack the calories needed

may refuse to eat hay with NDF levels above 65.

■ Calcium and phosphorus, essential minerals: varying amounts in different types of hay. A horse's total diet should provide these minerals in a certain ratio. For an adult horse at maintenance, the Ca:P ratio should be between 3:1 and 1:1.

Hay can also be analyzed for potassium, magnesium, sodium, iron, zinc, copper and other minerals. And you can get a breakdown of the nonstructural carbohydrates—the sugars and starch. Sugars are reported as ethanol-soluble carbohydrates or water-soluble carbohydrates, depending on how they are extracted. Fructans (plant sugars found in cool-season grasses) are included in WSC. "To estimate non-structural carbohydrate content, add WSC and starch," Dr. Martinson says. You may pay a little extra for these tests, but they're essential for some horses—for example, those with metabolic problems or the muscle disorder polysaccharide storage myopathy, who need rations low in non-structural carbs.

Stretch Your Dollars

Hay prices have been rising sharply in most areas, and cost has to be part of your hay-choice calculations. When you shop,

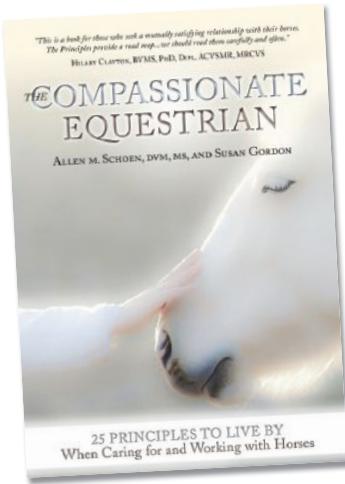
- look for local hay, which can be cheaper than hay shipped from out of state.
- buy in quantity for the best price. But don't buy more than you can store in a dry, protected and well-ventilated place, or much of it will go to waste.
- price by weight. The same hay may be priced differently depending on whether it's put up in small square bales, large square bales or round bales, so even if you buy by the bale, calculate the cost per ton. Larger bales are often a better buy but not if you don't have the equipment needed to move and stack them or enough horses to consume them efficiently.

After the hay is delivered, store it properly to prevent spoilage and maintain its nutritional value. A protected, well-ventilated place is essential because dampness and poor air circulation can cause hay to mold. How you stack your bales can help prevent damage, too. Here are three tips:

- When you stack at ground level, start on a base of wood pallets to keep ground moisture from penetrating the bales. Do this even on a concrete floor so that air can circulate under the stack.
- Set the bales on their sides so hay stalks run vertically. The air spaces between the stalks will act like tiny chimneys, helping moist air rise out.
- Don't jam the bales together. Set them close enough for support (a loose stack can topple easily) while still allowing air to move between them. ☐



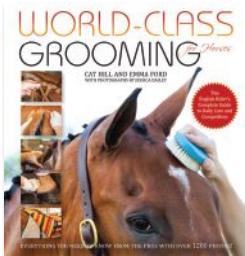
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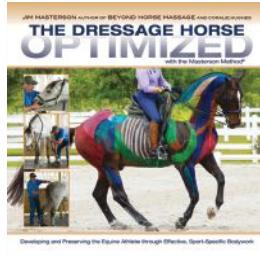
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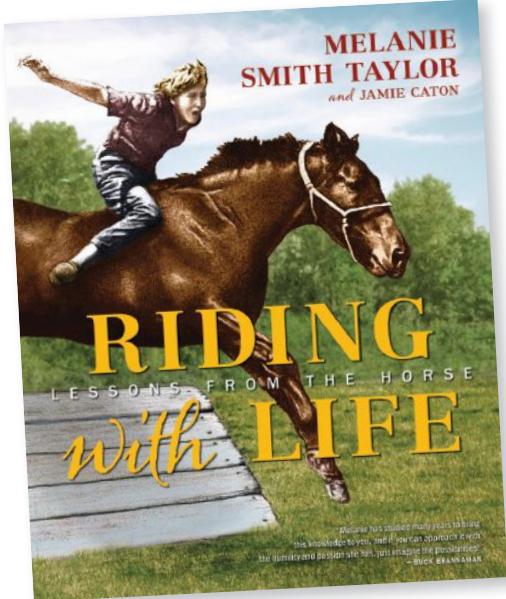
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Schooling Over Fences

This Olympic gold medalist shares her system to help your horse move in balance before and after a fence and jump in correct form.

By Melanie Smith Taylor and Jamie Caton

Though many know Melanie Smith Taylor as the winner of the 1982 World Cup Final and a show-jumping team gold medalist at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, she also is an advocate for horsemanship that "encompasses every aspect in the relationship between horse and human." She believes in ground work exercises as "the best way to learn and develop your horsemanship skills while laying a solid foundation for all future interactions with your horse." She studied this training perspective under renowned horsemen Ray Hunt and Buck Brannaman at her and her late husband Lee's Wildwood Farm in Germantown, Tennessee, where they primarily bred and

raised Thoroughbreds for polo.

In her new book, *Riding with Life: Lessons from the Horse*, Melanie encourages riders, no matter their level or discipline, to forge true partnerships with their horses. The book starts with her personal story, then focuses on the horse's physiology and natural

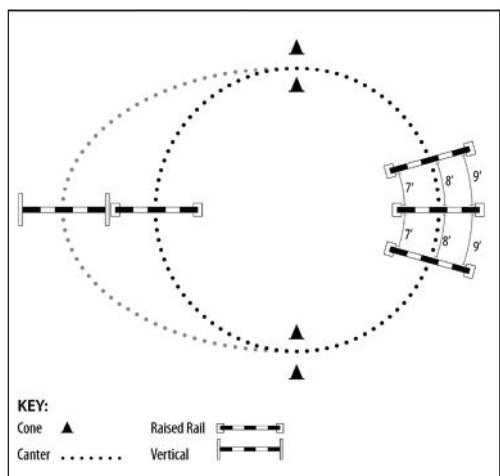


Figure 1: Relaxation circles. Position a jump end to end with a raised rail opposite three raised rails set 8 feet apart on a curve. To keep your horse with you, alternate trotting the rails and cantering the jump or single rail with cantering the rails and trotting the jump or single rail.

If you use a straight rail, make it a slant rail by raising the cup on the inside standard to encourage the horse to lift his inside leg slightly higher and land on the inside lead.



Our Partnership

Becoming a good rider takes much more than physical ability. You must also have emotional and mental focus coupled with drive, determination and an ongoing willingness to learn from wise mentors who will stimulate your curiosity and desire. Of the many talented riders around the world, those I respect the most are also superior horsemen. Consummate students of the horse, they have the passion and discipline not only to ride well but also to properly care for and manage their horses, keeping their well-being at the center of everything they do.

The Essentials

As I travel throughout the world, I'm amazed by the large number of horses and riders who haven't had opportunities to learn the basic principles and skills of horsemanship. Working with a horse without attention to these fundamentals inevitably leads to misunderstandings, which, in turn, cause mental and physical braces. In time the horse becomes dull, fearful or tuned out and even unsound.

Feeling frustrated and vulnerable, the rider will then resort to more severe tack and measures to gain control—or discard the horse altogether and buy another one. Nothing positive can come of such an unproductive cycle.

On the other hand, when we adopt the practices that master horsemen have used throughout the ages, everything falls into place with consistent success and pleasure for both the horse and rider. This humane, intelligent approach conforms to the horse's instincts and allows us to effectively communicate with him.

It's simple but not easy: To build a lasting, harmonious relationship with a horse, we must fully appreciate his gifts and reflect them back to him. When we cultivate those traits in ourselves and offer them to the horse, he becomes a respectful, willing partner whom we can direct in balance and lightness.

We cannot expect the horse to eagerly participate in our world without understanding what is natural and important to him. Self-preservation is his strongest instinct, so he looks for the following survival skills in his teammate and leader: acute powers of observation, excellent feel and timing, a keen sense of balance, agility and life and the unwavering discipline to protect the herd. These are the essentials for developing quality in the practice of horsemanship.

They apply to everything you would like to accomplish with your horse—not only to performing flatwork and jumping exercises in preparation for showing but also to roping cows, playing polo and taking a more enjoyable trail ride.

Working with your horse on the ground is the safest and most effective way to learn the skills and behaviors of an equine leader. A critical part of a horseman's daily repertoire, ground work helps establish and maintain clear communication, trust, a mental and physical connection and the hierarchy in your herd of two. When you carry those good habits into mounted work, there is no end in sight to the potential for improving your relationship with your horse and succeeding in whatever job or discipline you pursue.

All of the essential leadership skills are interconnected like pieces of a puzzle, each piece dependent on the others to complete the picture.

instincts and the basics of good horsemanship. Next comes ground work and mounted work. She finishes by explaining how to apply good horsemanship to jumping.

In this excerpt adapted from Chapter 12, Schooling Over Fences, Melanie shares two exercises to help horses jump in correct form, move in balance before and after a fence and remain calm and relaxed.

Circling to Stay Relaxed

Riding circles has three major benefits. First, for a horse who wants to rush, this exercise will help him relax by continuously turning him and keeping his eyes off the destination. On a straight line he is more apt to anticipate and not stay with you mentally.

Second, you will keep him from anticipating the jump by alternating it with raised rails on the circle. And third, practicing this maneuver in both directions will help him become ambidextrous. Horses must be able to jump off both leads and land on either one.

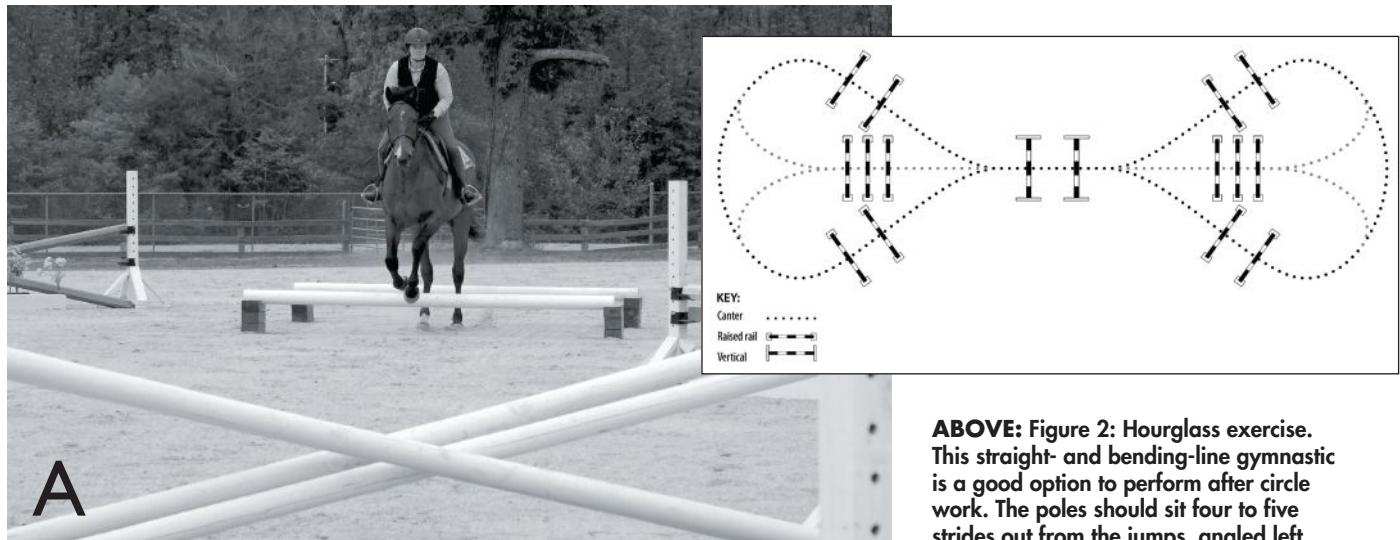
Exercise: Relaxation Circles

Position a jump (a crossrail or low vertical) end to end with a single raised rail opposite three raised rails set 8 feet apart on a curve (Figure 1, at left). The three rails are 7 feet apart on the inside and 9 feet on the outside, giving you striding choices depending on your approach to them. You can drift to the inside track to shorten the steps (or step) between the rails or to the outside to lengthen and then return to the center track. Place pairs of cones around the circle to help you maintain a constant diameter.

Begin by trotting the three raised rails (two steps in between) and trotting or cantering the opposite raised rail on the inside. Then alternate the single rail with the jump. It always helps to offer simpler options in between more difficult ones. When you're ready, canter the entire exercise, bouncing the three rails. Because the horse's body is shaped to the circle, he is more likely to naturally land on the correct lead after the rails and the jump.

To keep your horse waiting for you, alternate trotting the rails and cantering the fence or single rail with cantering the rails and trotting the fence or single rail. He will experience many balancing transitions while you develop your eye and relax your arms to feel the stride. As he relaxes, you will begin to find a consistent rhythm.

If you use a straight rail instead of a crossrail, turn it into a slant rail by raising the cup on the inside standard (see photo, at left). This will encourage the



horse to lift his inside leg slightly higher and land on the inside lead, while discouraging him from drifting and dropping his shoulder to the inside—a good example of setting the horse up to succeed.

Transitions in Gymnastics

In the jumping world, a gymnastic is a pattern of jumps designed to improve a horse's accuracy off the ground, encour-

ABOVE: Figure 2: Hourglass exercise. This straight- and bending-line gymnastic is a good option to perform after circle work. The poles should sit four to five strides out from the jumps, angled left, right and straight ahead, so you can vary your path following the gymnastic.

LEFT: A horse and rider follow the hourglass pattern: (A) cantering the bounce on a bending line toward the jumps; (B) jumping the gymnastic straight; (C) riding a transition back to the trot and choosing the straight line toward the raised rails.

age cleverness between obstacles and establish a better jumping style. Consisting of several fences in a row, a gymnastic often has additional ground or raised rails strategically placed before, between or after the series. You can ride the pattern as needed to isolate faults in your horse's form or exactness at takeoff, in the air or at the landing and achieve the desired adjustments. A well-planned configuration is much more beneficial than a slew of fences scattered about.

For optimal results, I incorporate transitions between gaits as part of my gymnastic scheme. Practicing transitions can never be overdone because they help balance your horse and give his stride adjustability. In the following exercises, you will ask for numerous transitions and adjustments to enhance your horse's balance and athleticism in front of, over and after each rail or jump. Lengthening and shortening strides in this fashion prepares him exponentially for more advanced work. He will also be more prone to stay with you men-

tally, feeling back to you and waiting for your direction when he lands.

Exercise: Hourglass

As explained, alternating circle exercises with straight and bending-line work will keep your horse light, adjustable and balanced. This gymnastic is a good option to perform after the previous relaxation circles. Here, you will position raised rails both before and after a series of jumps in an hourglass pattern. It is more practical to set up a gymnastic so you can jump it in both directions. The poles should sit four to five strides out from the jumps, angled left and right as well as straight ahead so you can vary your path following the gymnastic (Figure 2, at left).

The hourglass offers plenty of flexibility—you're limited only by your imagination. For example, make the jumps a 10- to 12-foot bounce one day and an 18- to 21-foot one stride another—or use a combination of the two with three jumps. For the raised rails, place three of them 3 to 4 feet apart on a straight line before and after the jumps. A series of closely placed rails requires the horse to think about the placement of his feet and encourages the trot transition. A braced horse is more apt to ignore you and continue at the canter over a single rail.

Then place two elevated rails 7 to 8 feet apart on each of the left and right angles before and after the jumps to allow the horse to trot or canter over them. Set the height of the rails at 6 or 12 inches. You can approach both heights at the trot or canter, but the 6-inch rails give you the option of trotting over both rails or jumping in and bouncing out at the canter. Your horse should bounce the 12-inch rails from either the trot or canter approach.

Begin trotting to any set of raised rails, transition down or continue at the trot or canter to the jumps, then transition back to the trot upon landing or continue at a soft canter. After the jumps, you can go straight and then turn left or right to return to the

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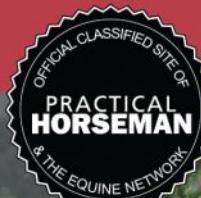
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As you progress from crossrails to verticals, roll out the ground lines about 2 feet on both sides of the jump to further improve balance and adjustability: (A) The front ground line encourages the horse to shift his weight back and jump off his hocks and gives him time to elevate his front end. (B) The back ground line encourages the horse to complete his arc and not cut down on the landing side. (C) A flower box added to the middle of the stride makes it a double bounce, teaching the horse how to be clever with his feet.

gymnastic on a bending line or you can bend and then return on a straight line. Constantly changing the gait and pattern will keep your horse soft, supple and tuned in to you—he must not only follow a feel but also focus on the line you choose and place his feet correctly over the raised rails before and after the jumps (see photos page 54).

Most horses have more difficulty slowing down and shortening strides than moving forward and lengthening them because they naturally carry more weight on the forehand and must shift it back over their haunches in downward transitions. Fences intensify this challenge because the thrust of a horse's jump transfers tremendous weight onto his forehand as he lands. When you keep the distances short inside the raised rails and the gymnastic (as described here), you encourage not only a steadier, balanced approach but also a slower, softer landing.

Riding the countless transitions in these exercises will teach your horse how to rebalance his weight to stay light on the landing, helping you regain control. You must recover your own position as quickly as possible to reinforce and contribute to his rebalancing effort. If you do nothing and he focuses instead on the next fence and takes over and braces against you, change his mind by transitioning down to the trot or even to the walk and then begin again. When he is thinking with you, not for you, he will be easier to manage once you are cantering an entire course.

As you practice, stay aware of your horse's straightness. Aim for the center of each rail or jump and be disciplined about leaving on a straight line. Even if you have curved to the left or right, ride out the straight line following the bend. Every stride has equal importance.

After you make a few laps back and forth through the exercise, stop your horse on a straight line. Check for lateral straightness and longitudinal weight shift and make any adjustments to center him within the imaginary rectangle so he can resume in better balance and self-carriage.

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As you progress from crossrails to verticals, roll out the ground lines (poles) about 2 feet on both sides of the jump as shown in the photos on page 56. (Don't roll them out as far for oxers.) Ground lines further improve balance and adjustability because they will shorten the stride in between the jumps even more, making the distances tighter than those typically used on a course. This arrangement gives the horse not only extra incentive to shift his weight back to jump off his hocks in balance at takeoff but also additional space to elevate his front end and be crisp with his knees—another example of allowing the exercise to teach your horse so your aids can remain soft and less intrusive while he focuses on the jump.

The ground line on the back side helps him complete his arc over the fence by encouraging him to jump farther beyond the top rails as opposed to cutting down on the landing. I often place a flower box in the middle of a one-stride combination, converting it to a double bounce to add variety and keep my horse attentive and clever with his feet.

Exercise: Hourglass Variation/ Diagonal Lines

When setting up my schooling courses, I alternate between an hourglass variation (Figure 3, top) and diagonal lines (Figure 3, bottom) by simply rearranging the raised rails.

Both layouts use four jumps, one in each quadrant of your riding area, and two pairs of raised rails in the center. This allows you to trot or canter into the line, practice a transition back to the trot or walk in the middle of the line and resume your trot or canter for the third element of the line. Your horse will begin to think back to you after landing over each jump, making it easier to prepare for the next one.

When you progress to cantering a line of fences without transitioning to the trot, it will require minimal effort to adjust your horse's stride because he will have learned to land softly and wait for

your direction. If that isn't the case, go back to making transitions in the middle of the line with raised rails to ensure you get trotting steps. You won't need to measure a specific distance between the jumps as long as you are transitioning in and out of the trot.

Note: When you place your fences, remember that the average canter is a 12-foot stride and you must add a half stride each for landing and taking off. For example, 60 feet is a four-stride distance

his stride (one large human step is about 3 feet).

When several people ride the diagonal lines at the same time, they must keep their eyes open for one another and "thread the needle" as they cross the centerline over the raised rails. The hourglass layout, on the other hand, allows many riders to practice simultaneously without worrying about crossing one another's paths in the center. (For plenty of room to pass, make sure to place the two pairs of center rails side by side as indicated.)

Another benefit of the hourglass is its curved lines, enabling you to make easier transitions because your horse can't see the goal—as you line up for the rails on the ground, no jump is directly in front of him. Unsure of the direction, he's more likely to wait for your instructions. Also, the curve of the line between fences allows you to adjust laterally as well as longitudinally so you can more easily add or omit strides by taking advantage of the inside or outside track.

For an advanced version of both exercises, either remove the raised rails in the middle or replace them with jumps, turning the pattern into a line of three fences at a continuous canter. Be sure the distance between each jump is manageable for your horse's level of education.

Start with low jumps and adjust the distances as necessary. You can set two jumps on the diagonal on a half-stride to give you the option of lengthening or shortening. For instance, 72 feet would ride in a normal five strides, but if you set the distance at 78 feet (adding 6 feet for a half-stride), you could ride a steady, shorter six strides or a forward, longer five strides. ☐

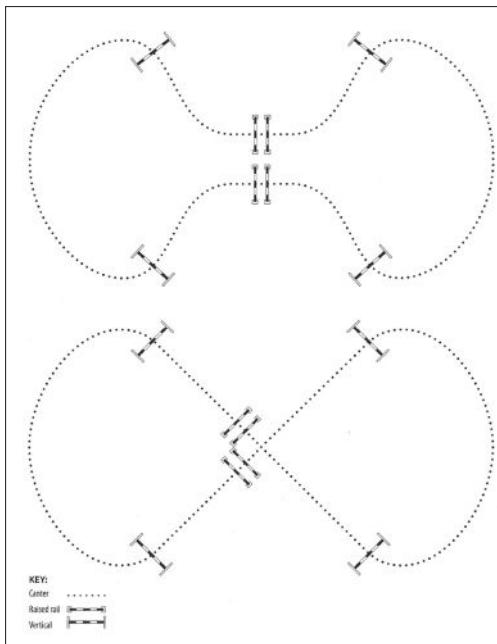


Figure 3: When setting up your schooling courses, you can alternate between an hourglass variation (top) and diagonal lines (bottom) by simply re-arranging the center raised rails. Both layouts teach your horse to think back to you after jumping.

($4 \times 12 = 48$) plus 6 feet for taking off and 6 feet for landing. But don't get too hung up on exact numbers. This is a generic formula—you must also take into account the height and type of fence and your pace. The higher the fence, the farther away the takeoff and landing; the wider the fence (spread), the closer the takeoff and landing; and the faster the pace, the longer the stride. Learn to approximate where your horse will land and take off and practice walking the distance between fences as it relates to



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How do I stop him from swapping leads?

Q

I compete in the Adult Amateur hunter division with my 12-year-old Trakehner/Morgan-cross gelding. He places well consistently, but when he swaps his lead in the front it keeps us out of the top ribbons. The swap usually happens off the left lead on a

long gallop to a single fence. He will swap leads in front only on the stride before takeoff. Also, when he comes around a turn into a line on the left lead, he will usually hold the lead over the first jump and land on his right lead down the line. He is sound and has regular chiropractic checkups and massages. Please help!

KIM WILLIAMS

A

It's perfectly normal for a horse to approach a jump on one lead and land on the opposite lead. However, swapping leads in front, or cross-cantering, is considered a fault in the hunter ring and judges will penalize it as such—some more heavily than others. It can happen for a variety of reasons. In general, when a horse cross-canters in the approach to a jump, he is probably trying to shift his weight away from some source of pain or weakness in his body in preparation for the takeoff. This is a moment that requires a great deal of power, both from the front and hind legs, so your horse may be swapping leads in an

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To address a horse that cross-canters in front of a fence, jump a Swedish oxer to help him center himself in the middle of the jump and keep his body straight in the air.

effort to transfer the physical burden onto a stronger or more reliable leg.

It sounds like you are diligent about his health and wellness, but it would be worth investigating possible medical sources of the problem a little further. Ask your veterinarian to examine him thoroughly to determine if he is hurting somewhere in his body or legs. The problem could be anything from hoof pain to a sore back, hock or sacroiliac joint.

Also check your saddle fit carefully. (If you don't know how to do this, ask an experienced horseperson for help or consult an expert saddle fitter.) Is it sitting too low on your horse's withers? Is it pinching his shoulders? Any discomfort could be contributing to this problem.

If you can't find a physical cause for the cross-cantering, it might simply result from one-sidedness. Just like humans, many horses have a weak side and a strong side. Your horse may just prefer to take off over jumps from his strong side.

Once you've ruled out any source of discomfort, begin to correct the habit by focusing on straightness. In order to produce a good jumping effort, your horse must be straight in his body on takeoff, over the jump and on landing. His weaker side will grow stronger as he becomes straighter in his body, making him less prone to cross-canter.

In your schooling at home, place two ground poles perpendicular to a jump, one on the takeoff side and the other on the landing side. Roll them a few feet to the right of center, close enough to the track that they'll get your horse's attention but not so close that he risks stepping on them. This will help to keep him straight before and after the fence. (Note: If you try this exercise at a show, be sure the ground poles are placed at least 9 feet from the jump, per U.S. Equestrian Federation schooling rules.)

Another helpful exercise is to initiate a turn in the air, asking your horse to land on his weaker lead. In this case, ask him to turn left and land on his left lead. Take the exercise one step further by practicing making fairly small circles (about 30 me-

ters in diameter) over the jump, so that he is continuously turning left. This will help to strengthen his weak lead and discourage the swap to his preferred lead.

Practicing over a Swedish oxer will force your horse to center himself in the middle of the jump and keep his body straight in the air. To build one, start with a square oxer set at your normal jumping height. Then lower one front rail jump cup by a few holes. Raise the other front rail jump cup by the same number of holes. Do the same with the back rail, only lowering and raising the opposite cups, so that it is higher on the side that is lower in the front and lower on the side that is higher in the front.

How you address this problem in the show ring depends on your ability level. If you are a novice rider, you may be tempted to pull on the left rein to prevent the lead swap. But this will just make your horse bulge his body to the right even more, creating a more likely cross-canter scenario. It may sound counterintuitive, but you need to pull on the right rein to straighten his body and maintain the lead. Think of your horse's body as a curved banana, with his head and haunches positioned to the left of the rest of his body. To straighten him, you need to transform the banana into a pencil by pulling on your right rein. Meanwhile, keep your own body very centered over the middle of the saddle and close your outside leg (your right leg, in this case) slightly behind the girth to discourage his body from bulging to the right.

More advanced riders should use the same technique. In addition, they can ride the track strategically to discourage the swap. For example, if there is a left turn to a fence, you could overshoot the turn slightly and then aim to jump at a slight right-to-left angle. This will prevent your horse from shifting his weight in the approach and will thus help to hold the lead.

Hunter/jumper/equitation trainer Kim Williams began her career competing as an amateur owner. She won many top hunter

and jumper awards in the U.S. and Europe, including the grand prix in Reims, France, in 1987. Her most successful partner was an Argentinean Thoroughbred named Whadyasay!, with whom she won multiple Amateur Owner Hunter grand championships at top horse shows in the 1980s. Kim turned professional in the early 1990s and founded her full-service show barn, Willow Wood. Now based on a 50-acre farm she leases from Dr. and Mrs. Richard Nessif in Woodbine, Maryland, she prepares adults, juniors, pony and equitation riders for local and rated competitions.

Kim and one of her students, Lindsay Smith, were featured in the 2006 Animal Planet series, "Horse Power: Road to the Mayclay." Kim has also guided her three daughters, Emily, Hannah and Ellie, to successful starts in the show ring.

Roadwork: Is it good or bad?

QThis is my first season eventing at Preliminary level and I'm learning some new techniques for getting my horse fitter. I've heard of several trainers who trot their horses on hard-packed dirt roads to strengthen their legs. I was always told that the concussion of trotting on roads is bad for horses' legs. Was that an old wives' tale?

LAURA WERNER, DVM

AWalking and trotting horses on firm footing is a common practice that racing, foxhunting and eventing trainers have used for years, particularly in Europe. Their reasoning is that the physical stress caused by controlled amounts of concussion stimulates the tendons and ligaments to grow stronger during a young horse's development. Scientific studies have shown that

early exercise, though not specifically on roads, is critical to tendon development in young horses. Careful, controlled roadwork can be an acceptable component in a training program aimed to promote such healthy development.

For mature and aging horses, however, roadwork offers a mixed bag of pros and cons. In the wintertime and early spring, it can be a good alternative for fitness work when other outdoor riding areas are too muddy or icy. It also provides a nice change of scenery. For eventing specifically, roadwork helps to expand horses' and riders' familiarity with different types of footing. When galloping across country, eventers need to be ready to handle a variety of surfaces and uneven terrain.

Horses recovering from soft-tissue injuries can benefit more from walking and trotting on firm footing, such as packed dirt roads, than from working on deep, soft footing. The latter can add more strain to tendons and ligaments and thus slow the rehabilitation process or, worse, risk re-injury.

Unfortunately, roadwork also has its downsides. It can cause excessive stress and strain on joints, particularly in older horses. It can also aggravate hoof problems. Many horses do not have strong enough feet to withstand the pounding on hard roads. It's very important, therefore, to consult your veterinarian about your horse's individual needs before carefully weighing the benefits and drawbacks of roadwork.

If your veterinarian gives you the OK to ride your horse on roads, select safe, quiet ones with limited, slow-moving traffic, good surfaces, wide shoulders and, if possible, no loose neighborhood dogs. An ideal road surface is hard-packed dirt that still has a little give. If you're lucky enough to be near a beach, the firm sand along the waterline is also a good surface to work on. If your choices are limited to paved roads, inspect their surfaces carefully. Some asphalt is covered with a slick coating, which may cause dangerous slips or even falls. Ask your veterinarian and



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If you plan to do roadwork with your horse on paved surfaces, inspect them carefully before hitting the road. Some asphalt is covered with a slick coating, which may cause dangerous slips or even falls.

fARRIER if they recommend additional traction for working on your local roads. Putting a little borium—a granular metal treatment—on your horse's shoes may help to prevent accidents and injuries.

If you decide to do roadwork, think of it as part of his routine fitness program, limiting its frequency in the same way you limit his speed work. When preparing for a competition, upper-level horses may do it every five days while most lower-level horses generally do it no more than once a week. As with all of your other fitness work, start slowly and gradually increase the duration of your workouts. Check your horse for any signs of problems after each session. Contact your veterinarian if you notice swelling in his legs or lameness.

If you and your veterinarian decide that the concussion from trotting on roads is inadvisable for your particular horse, consider walking on them instead. This produces far less concussion but still provides great benefits. Walking exercise, no matter what type of footing you're on, for 30 minutes before or after a dressage school, for example, will help to increase your horse's car-

diovascular and muscular fitness. And it's safe to do it as often as several times a week. ☐

Laura Werner, DVM, MS, Diplomate, American College of Veterinary Surgeons, is a veterinary surgeon specializing in lameness and equine emergency services. After veterinary school, she completed her surgical internship at Hagyard Equine Medical Institute in Lexington, Kentucky, followed by a residency and master's degree program at The Ohio State University. She then taught at Ohio State for over a year before joining a private practice in central California, where she performed surgery for six years. In 2011, she joined the Hagyard Equine Medical Institute's Davidson Surgery Center as a surgery associate. In addition to her surgical duties, she is continuing research on septic arthritis and osteomyelitis.

An event rider with experience at the Preliminary level, Dr. Werner enjoys "living vicariously through others" by treating mounts of her fellow competitors, including Young Riders and Olympians. She also serves as an FEI (International Equestrian Federation) veterinary delegate at some of the top U.S. events.

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6 Things to Do in AUGUST

□ CHEER ON some of the country's top ponies and their riders at the USEF Pony Finals, Aug. 3–9, in Lexington, KY. Running for nearly half a century, the annual show includes Green and Regular pony divisions, a Pony Jumper division and the Marshall and Sterling/Pony Medal; www.ponyfinals.org.

□ WATCH the nation's top hunters during the USHJA International Hunter Derby Finals, Aug. 13–15, in Lexington, KY. More than \$100,000 in prize money will be up for grabs in this two-round championship that features a Classic Hunter course and a Handy Hunter course; www.ushja.org.

□ EXPERIENCE a weekend of eventing action in the Rockies at the Colorado Horse Park CCI*/CIC** and Horse Trials, Aug. 14–16, in Parker, CO. The popular event features two Classic-format divisions along with classes for young horses; www.coloradohorsepark.com.

□ CHECK OUT the Festival of the Horse and Drum, a multi-cultural celebration in St. Charles, IL, Aug. 15–16. The family-friendly event offers a variety of riding and breed demonstrations and individual villages including a Renaissance Faire, a War Horse History Fest, a Breyer horse show and an eques-

trian film festival; www.festivalofthehorseanddrum.com.

□ ENJOY world-class dressage at the 2015 USEF Dressage Festival of Champions, which features some of the nation's rising equine stars at the Markel/USEF Young Horse Dressage National Championships, Aug. 18–23, in Wayne, IL; www.usef.org.

□ ATTEND the Hampton Classic Show, Aug. 23–30, in Bridgehampton, NY. This show is a favorite of New Yorkers, who enjoy the \$50,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby and the \$250,000 FTI Grand Prix; www.hamptonclassic.com.

Greetings from CUMBERLAND ISLAND, GEORGIA



salt marshes, maritime forests and more

than 17 miles of golden brown beaches.

I took a short ferry ride from St. Marys, Georgia, to spend a few days on the island. You can either camp out on the island or splurge at the interesting and historic Greyfield Inn, the only lodging on the island. Built in 1900 as a wedding present for Lucy and Thomas Carnegie's daughter Margaret, the small, elegant inn is filled with family antiques. Its front porch is also a prime spot to sit and watch horses, who like to graze just outside the hotel. The horses who roam the island are thought to be a blend of stock from the Carnegie family mixed with horses from other plantation owners and Spanish steeds of

years past.

We watched a family group of wild horses graze on the lawn outside of Greyfield Inn. There was a black foal, who must have been only about 2 months old, traveling with four other horses. The foal danced around a bit for our cameraman. I felt as if we were on a safari as I quietly observed the group dynamics.

I recommend staying on the island to do your wild horse viewing, taking a few days away from the modern, busy world to go off the grid and enjoy nature at its finest. You'll certainly learn more about herd hierarchy and relax in a place where wildlife and nature truly rule.

Best,
Darley

Darley Newman is the founder of Equitrekking Travel, offering equestrian vacations as seen on the two-time Daytime Emmy award-winning TV series Equitrekking on PBS. For more, visit www.Equitrekking.com, www.EquitrekkingTravel.com or read Darley's blog at www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com.

WEIGHT THE INSIDE EDGE OF YOUR STIRRUPS

By Wendy Murdoch

When jumping, do you

- turn your foot out too much?
- lose foot contact with the stirrup?
- have difficulty keeping your thigh on?
- roll to the outside of your foot?

This exercise will teach you that a heel *eversion* is all that is necessary to correct these issues. A slight eversion of the heel places the rider's weight to the inside edge

on the stirrup without turning the foot out.

Slightly weight-ing the inside edge of your foot secures your leg, keeps your leg close to the horse and widens the area at the back of your hip while allowing your heel to sink down.

Exercise: On The Ground

Sit on a flat surface with both feet on the ground. Make sure one foot is flat on the floor. This is the foot you will start with. Your heel will be in a neutral position when the weight is evenly

and then with both feet at the same time.

Photo 2: *Invert* your foot by pressing the outside edge of your heel toward the floor, slightly lifting the inside edge while keeping the heel in place. Your heel is slightly to the inside of the neutral starting position. Observe that your knee turns outward and the area at the back of the hips closes. If you invert both feet together, your knees will widen.

Photo 3: *Supinate* your foot by lifting your heel and the inside edge of your foot off the floor. Only the outside edge of your pinky toe remains. Feel how your knee turns out. When you supinate on your horse, most of your weight is on your seat and the horse's back because your leg has come away from the saddle. You will have to grip with the back of your leg and calf or override this with a lot of inner-thigh grip.

Photo 4: *Pronate* by lifting the outside edge of your foot off the floor, leaving the inside edge of your heel on the floor. Your knee will internally rotate and adduct. When you pronate with both feet, the knees may touch. In the saddle, this causes you to pinch with your knees and restrict your pelvis. In this position, the lower back hollows and you have to brace the foot against the stirrup, pushing the lower leg forward to get your heels down. The hips close, causing you to lie on your horse's neck over fences.

When pronated and supinated, your knees are no longer aligned over your feet. This stresses your knees when riding and walking. Ideally, your knee is aligned over your second toe both on the flat and over fences.

Adapted from 40 5-Minute Jumping Fixes by Wendy Murdoch. Available at www.EquineNetworkStore.com.



distributed across the foot from side to side and front to back. Think of a line dropping from the back of your knee down through the center of your heel.

Photo 1: *Evert* your foot by pressing the inside edge of your heel against the floor while allowing the outside edge to lift slightly. Try not to let your heel slide. It will now be slightly to the outside of the body's midline. Feel how your thigh moves medially (toward the midline) from knee to hip. Notice how this widens the area at the back of your hip. This would keep your thigh against the saddle without having to use a lot of grip because your whole leg has moved inward. Repeat with your other foot

News BITS

U.S. Pan American Games Teams Named

The U.S. Equestrian Federation has named the teams of horses and riders who will represent the United States in the Pan

American Games in show jumping, eventing and dressage. The Games are scheduled to run July 10–26, in Toronto, Canada.

The U.S. riders are:

Show Jumping

- **Georgina Bloomberg** and Lilli
- **Kent Farrington** and Gazelle
- **Lauren Hough** and Ohlala
- **McLain Ward** and Rothchild

Eventing

- **Phillip Dutton** and Fernhill Cubalawn
- **Lauren Kieffer** and Meadowbrook's Scarlett
- **Marilyn Little** and RF Scandalous
- **Boyd Martin** and Pancho Villa

Dressage

Big Tour

- **Laura Graves** and Verdades
- **Steffen Peters** and Legolas 92

Small Tour

- **Kimberly Herslow** and Rosmarin
- **Sabine Schut-Kery** and Sanceo

Hunter Team Championships Launched

A new U.S. Hunter Jumper Association Children's and Adult Amateur Hunter Regional Championships will kick off next year. The championships were created to provide riders with a competitive team experience and an opportunity to earn Zone Horse of the Year bonus points in their respective Children's or Adult Amateur hunter sections.

"We're excited to bring this new program to our membership, enabling Children's and Adult Amateur hunter riders to compete at both the individual and team environments for great regional recognition," said USHJA Hunter Vice President Mary Babick.

There will be four two-day regional championships in



© AMY K. DRAGO

McLain Ward and Rothchild



PHOTOS © AMY K. DRAGO/AMMEDIA

Phillip Dutton and Fernhill Cubalawn



PHOTOS © AMY K. DRAGO/AMMEDIA

Laura Graves and Verdades

2016—South, Central, West and North. For more information, visit www.ushja.org/chaahunter.com.

New USDF Youth Dressage Seminar

The U.S. Dressage Federation has created a new Youth Dressage Sport Horse Breeder/Handler Seminar in partnership with Dressage at Devon. The seminar will be September 28–29 at the show in Devon, Pennsylvania, and consist of classroom and practical handling sessions along with the opportunity to observe competition classes and practice judging. Participation is limited to USDF members between the ages of 14 and 23; 12

PRACTip

"The easiest way to become fast on cross country is to get away from the jumps quickly and efficiently, making up time on the landing side." —From *Modern Eventing with Phillip Dutton* by Phillip Dutton with Amber Heintzberger. Available at www.equinetworkstore.com.

Have a favorite tip or fact? Submit it to practical.horseman@EquiNetwork.com. We'll send you a Practical Horseman keychain if we publish it.



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Winner's CIRCLE

spots are available. Enter by August 31 to receive the \$75 rate. For more information, visit the USDF website at www.usdf.org and click on the Youth tab.

European Tour for Up-And-Coming Eventers

The U.S. Equestrian Team Foundation and the U.S. Equestrian Federation announced the establishment of the 2016 Karen Stives European Developing Tour for Eventing. The tour will be funded by an endowment set up last year in Stives's name. It is intended to give talented developing athletes the experience necessary to prepare for international championships.

Selected members of the USEF's Developing Rider Program will join the tour to compete at European events. They will compete at the Rockingham CIC and Bramham International CCI***-U25 in Great Britain.

"Through the generosity and true understanding of Karen in terms of knowing what it takes to win on the world stage, many more developing eventing riders will have the opportunity to compete



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Hannah Sue Burnett was one of the first riders to benefit from the Karen Stives Endowment Fund last year.

in Europe among the world's best," said Bonnie B. Jenkins, USEF Foundation executive director.

Visit www.usef.org for more information on the tour.



© NANCY JAFFER

Scott Stewart and Ashcroft on their way to the Second Year Green Championship

sunk in at all," said Cruciotti.

Scott Stewart won the Leading Hunter Rider for the 13th time, taking home the Green Conformation Championship with First Light, the Second Year Green Championship with Ashcroft and the Reserve Championship in the Regular Conformation Hunters with Lucador. **Kelley Farmer** earned both the Grand Hunter Championship title for the third year in a row and the High Performance Working Hunter Championship with Mindful. "He's an unbelievable animal," Farmer said.

Junior rider **Victoria "Tori" Colvin** took home the Best Child Rider on a Horse award for the fifth time. Colvin earned the Small Junior 16 & 17 Hunter Championship with Canadian Blue and the Reserve with Ovation and the Large Junior 16 & 17 Championship with Way Cool and the Reserve with Small Affair.

King Clinches Two Victories

Candice King and her new partner, Valinski S, earned top honors at the \$75,000 Horseware Ireland Grand Prix—their fourth class together—in May at the Tryon International Equestrian Center in Tryon, North Carolina. King was just one of two riders in the 28-entry field to make it to the jump-off, where her 50.705 bested **Angel Karolyi**'s round. The previous week, King and Valinski won the \$25,000 Suncast 1.45-meter Welcome Stake at the same venue, in only her third time riding the gelding. "I'm so thrilled with him," said King. "He's been absolutely great. This is another great step in the partnership we're creating with him."



© SPORTFOT

Candice King and Valinski S

A Gentle End

Anyone who faces the difficult decision to put down a horse has to wonder: Will euthanasia really end his life quickly and painlessly or will he suffer? A new study offers some peace of mind.

A research team led by Monica Aleman, MVZ Cert., PhD, DACVIM, a faculty member in the Large Animal Medicine Service at the UC Davis Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital, set out to determine how quickly brain death occurs in the euthanasia method most veterinarians use—a lethal overdose of the anesthetic sodium pentobarbital delivered rapidly through an intravenous infusion. A horse's death is typically determined by physical signs: The heart stops and the horse stops breathing. Brain death is different. Defined as the complete loss of brain function, it's measured by the absence of electrical activity in

the cerebral cortex, the "gray matter" responsible for processing sensory information, orchestrating voluntary movement and maintaining awareness, and of reflexes in the brain stem, which is responsible for involuntary functions such as breathing. Although brain death is an accepted way of determining death in people, less is known about how it occurs in horses.

Dr. Aleman's study tracked changes in 15 horses who required euthanasia for a variety of conditions. The horses

Although euthanizing a horse can be a difficult decision, a recent study found that the widely used euthanasia method is effective and humane.

were hooked up to a range of instruments for recording brain activity and other body functions, including electroencephalogram (EEG) and electrocardiogram (ECG) equipment, and they were monitored as the sodium pentobarbital took effect. The results:

- Electrical activity in the cerebral cortex vanished within 52 seconds of the administration of the drug, in some cases while the infusion was still in progress.
- Loss of brain-stem activity followed quickly, as shown by a lack of blink reflexes and pupil response to light and by a brain-stem auditory-evoked response (BAER) test. The total time from administration of the drug to brain death ranged from about a minute to just over four minutes.

■ Physical signs mirrored the neurological tests. Heart sounds and pulse were undetectable within a minute.

The ECG continued to show traces of electrical activity in the heart for five to 16 minutes after the end of the infusion. But at this point "brain death has already occurred," Dr. Aleman notes. Her study provides reassurance that the most-used euthanasia method is effective, fast and humane.

National Survey

How much do U.S. horse owners typically spend each year to keep their animals healthy? How are they guarding against infectious diseases like equine herpes virus? What's being done to control internal parasites and disease-spreading ticks? How common is lameness and how is it managed?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Animal Health Monitoring System is looking for answers to those questions and more through Equine 2015, a national study of the U.S. horse industry. The goal is to capture an up-to-date picture of equine management practices, disease prevalence and other information important to the horse industry.

Equine 2015 is the third NAHMS study of the horse industry; earlier surveys were done in 1998 and 2005. The effort launched in May. Over the summer USDA representatives carried out Phase One, conducting personal interviews with selected horse owners in 28 states from Alabama to Wyoming. Together these states are home to more than 70 percent of the horses, donkeys and mules in the country. To take part, operations had to meet the agency's definition of a farm: sell at least \$1,000 of agricultural products per year or have at least five equids. Racetracks were not included.

In Phase Two, which starts in September and will continue into December, representatives from the USDA's Veterinary Services division will visit



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The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Animal Health Monitoring System is surveying horse farms for information about vaccination practices, parasite control, tick-borne diseases and more.

the farms that have chosen to continue in the study. They'll ask for information on vaccination practices, parasite problems and control practices, tick-borne diseases and tick control, lameness occurrence and management and equine health-care costs. If the owner chooses, the Veterinary Services representative will also

■ collect fecal samples from up to six horses to evaluate potential parasite resistance to deworming medications. Fecal samples will also be cultured for intestinal bacteria such as *Salmonella* and *E. coli*, which will be tested for resistance to antibiotics.

■ examine up to 10 horses for ticks and send any that are found to the National Veterinary Services Laboratories for identification.

■ collect blood samples to create a serum bank for future research studies.

■ conduct a biosecurity assessment of the farm.

Participants will receive results of the biosecurity assessment and some of the biologic sample testing. Once the information gathered in the study is analyzed, it will be released in fact sheets and reports to raise awareness of important horse-health problems, identify trends and provide a springboard for future research.—Elaine Pascoe

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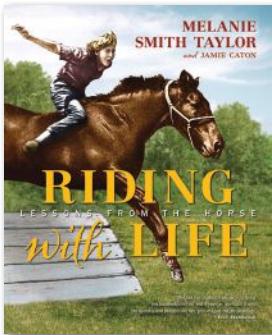
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"Riding with Life offers valuable insights on both groundwork and jumping, and is a great recipe for bridging a huge gap in the horse world."—George Morris

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Making My Way In the Horse World

By Matt Drohan

Coming out of the 2015 Intercollegiate Horse Show Association Nationals as a member of the Reserve Collegiate Cup Team last May, I gained not only friends and supporters but a sense of gratitude. While preparing for my upcoming sophomore year at Centenary College, I started to ponder how I'd gotten to such a great place.

I began my journey into the equine industry in seventh grade, volunteering at Seaside 4 Therapeutic Riding at Jamaica Bay Riding Academy in Brooklyn, New York. Then I became a trail guide there. From these experiences, my passion for horses grew, so three years

later, I joined the resident Interscholastic Equestrian Association's Metropolitan Equestrian Team as a Novice rider. Though I was raised in a single-parent household and didn't have financial opportunities to devote to horses, I received a scholarship from MET and finished my IEA career in the Open division and as the team's co-captain.

In my final two years at Xaverian High School, I also participated in the College Preparatory Invitational in Wellington, Florida, first as a rider in my junior year and then as the

horse-show manager assistant as a senior. After riding there, I was recruited by several colleges and universities and offered scholarships. This made the final decision of where to go quite difficult. I knew I wanted to make a go of a career in the equine industry. Which college would put me where I wanted to be in four years?

I decided on Centenary College in Hackettstown, New Jersey, as the place to earn my undergraduate business degree and join its acclaimed IHSA team. The summer before I started, I found a working-student position with successful rider and course designer Eric Hasbrouck, whom I was introduced to by Connie Sawyer, a public relations specialist and CPI friend. The day after my high-school graduation, I flew to Spruce Meadows in Calgary where I groomed for Eric. When we returned to The Pavilion Farm in North Salem, New York, where Eric is head trainer, I took riding lessons and completed chores for the rest of the summer.

Then it was off to college. The Centenary College Equestrian Team is a family of 68. We have our ups and downs, but whether

we lose or, hopefully, win, we're always cheering for each other. We joke when we call our coaches, Heather Clark and Michael Dowling, "Mom and Dad," but that's how we view them at times. Parents care for you, push you and always catch you when you fall. Anthony DeSimone, who graduated last spring, captured my feelings for these coaches in his farewell: "They put their hearts into our team every single year—putting in countless hours to make successful not only the team but each individual. There is no way any of us can repay you for what you do for us." It was especially great this year being part of the Reserve Collegiate Cup win with fellow freshmen Skylar Laakso and Shelby Keefe.

Through Centenary connections, I found a position grooming for Ireland's Darragh Kenny at the Winter Equestrian Festival in Wellington earlier this year during winter break. There I again experienced how a top show barn is run and expanded my network in the equine industry—and I'm looking forward to seeing my extended Irish family again at WEF next year!

With the knowledge I have gained from all of these experiences, I soon hope to begin a new chapter in my life—as a rider. I dream of one day competing at the top level of the sport. To that end, Lilly Johnson, a successful and dedicated groom for rider Shane Sweetnam, introduced me to Nikko Ritter, the assistant trainer at Peter Leone's Lionshare Farm, in Greenwich, Connecticut. As a result, this summer I will be a working student there, riding several horses each day among other responsibilities and chores.

Throughout this journey, there have been many people who have helped and encouraged me, and I am extremely grateful. There also have been a few who have steered me away from this dream because of its challenges. But I hope my actions and successes one day will prove them wrong. When the time comes for me to reflect on my life and aspirations, I want to be able to say "I did it all."



Matt Drohan and Centenary College's Croft O.B.

To read Matt Drohan's daily reports from the 2015 IHSA National Finals, go to www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com.

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